

PENTECOST 17 YEAR A
EZEKIEL 18:1-4, 25-32
PHILIPPIANS 2:1-13
MATTHEW 21:23-32
SEPTEMBER 30, OCTOBER 1, 2017

Music and hymns have always been an important part of the worship life of God's people. From the earliest times, music has reflected the thoughts and feelings of God's people. The psalms are hymns of praise, lament, thanksgiving and worship. When Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea the people sang hymns of thanksgiving for God's deliverance. When David was successful in his military operations the people sang hymns of thanksgiving and praise for God's faithfulness. When the people were angry with God their hymns reflected that anger. When they were grieving they used music to reflect their sadness.

Music in the church reflects the season of the year but also helps share the message for the day. When our committee sits down to plan services we look at the readings for the day and the likely focus of the sermon. The hymns chosen, the choir anthems and the bell choir music reflects the theme for the day. We do not choose Easter hymns during the season of Lent. We also do not choose Lent hymns during the season of Easter. We do not usually choose Christmas hymns in seasons other than Christmas. We use music in many areas of our lives. We use music to lift us and to console us. We use music to help us feel better and to help us in our grieving. Music is an important part of our lives.

Philippians 2:5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

Paul writes to the Philippians that they should be of the same mind as Christ Jesus. He may have been writing to a divided church. Jesus taught that a house divided against itself cannot stand. He also taught and prayed that the church would remain a united body of Christ. When Paul teaches about being of the same mind as Jesus he is teaching that they should be one as the Father and Son are one but also remain obedient to the word and will of God as Jesus

was. They were to hear the word of the Lord and remember the life our Lord lives and seek to do the same. They were to remain obedient.

We see this being carried out in our own country. The other evening at our theological conference, Bishop Eaton preached about being of the same mind as Christ Jesus but also about a nation divided. The most visible and perhaps divisive issue is football players and the National Anthem. We can debate this at another time if you want but in my opinion the issue has little to do with whether someone stands for the Anthem or not but the division and the split between people. People that are oppressed or that think they are oppressed will take drastic measures to be heard. Most of the players in the NFL are Christian people who also dearly love our country. They know that the real heroes are those that lay down their lives every day so that we have the right to protest peacefully. Most that protest simply want to be heard and then have their needs met or at least addressed. They are not anti-American or anti-Christian. This is evident in that some have donated game checks and done other things to raise funds for victims of hurricanes and earthquakes.

Jesus was not always popular in what he was doing. It was not popular for Jesus to turn over the tables of the money changers in the temple. In our reading from Matthew 21, the religious authorities ask about the right and the authority Jesus did such things. Our Lord's ministry often placed him with the tax collectors, sinners and the oppressed. Being of the same mind as Christ means we stand with those that are oppressed and hurting. We speak for those that cannot speak for themselves. We risk being talked about or persecuted as we work for justice and peace in our land. Many are singing songs of lament as they endure what they perceive as oppression. Jesus listened to those that were hurting. We that call ourselves Christian also must listen to those that are hurting and reach out in love.

Philippians 2:6-8 ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

Many have said that these verses from Philippians 2 are an early Christian hymn. It is a Christian hymn that celebrates and gives thanks to God for Jesus Christ. The words of these verses reflect the story of our Lord. These verses tell of Jesus becoming humble and emptying himself as he became a man. Jesus became a slave or a servant. As Paul writes, Jesus was obedient, even to death on a cross. He came to be our Savior and our Messiah. Our salvation was accomplished on the cross and through his obedience. This early Christian hymn proclaims the truth of God's love for us in that Jesus came to live and to die that our sins would be forgiven and that we would have life.

If we read the scriptures we know that Jesus is eternal just as the Father is eternal. He has no beginning and no end but is the creative power and authority of God. John 1 says that Jesus was God and is God. John 1 also says that nothing was created without the Word that became Flesh and lived among us.

Philippians 2:9-11 ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The second part of the hymn praises what God did for Jesus. Because of his obedience God exalted Jesus and gave him the name that we all proclaim. The name of Jesus is the one we worship and he is the one we bend our knee to. We also make our confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. We worship the Lord and we give glory to God. Paul wrote about the Philippians regarding others as better themselves meaning they do not seek to promote themselves and their accomplishments. In the same way, Jesus did not seek to promote himself.

Jesus did not claim to be greater than anyone else but regarded himself as a servant. Jesus did not promote himself but was promoted by God the Father. In the same way, we humble ourselves giving glory to God. The Father exalts us and lifts us as we are humble.

This early Christian hymn helps us know about Jesus and how he can be our Lord. It celebrates Jesus Christ and our salvation. This Christian hymn tells us about being of one mind with Christ. We are of one mind as we become servants caring for others as they are hurting and celebrating with those that are celebrating. We give glory to God and we lift the name of Jesus. AMEN