

**Preacher:** Pastor Twyla

**Scripture:** Psalm 150

*<sup>1</sup> Praise the Lord!*

*Praise God in his sanctuary;*

*praise him in his mighty firmament!*

*<sup>2</sup> Praise him for his mighty deeds;*

*praise him according to his surpassing greatness!*

*<sup>3</sup> Praise him with trumpet sound;*

*praise him with lute and harp!*

*<sup>4</sup> Praise him with tambourine and dance;*

*praise him with strings and pipe!*

*<sup>5</sup> Praise him with clanging cymbals;*

*praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

*<sup>6</sup> Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!*

*Praise the Lord!*

This morning as it does every Sunday, the glorious music that has filled our sanctuary has imparted the message of the gospel to us. I for one can say that the music in worship is instrumental in connecting me with God and with you.

Music is a gift from God. I cannot imagine a world without music. It has this mysterious and powerful ability to cross boundaries and bring people together and to express in an almost miraculous way what words alone cannot always express.

It has a way of helping us travel through the dark clouds of our difficult times. I remember during a difficult time in my life, listening to Neil Diamond's recording of "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother," over and over again and through it feeling the arms of Jesus holding me and giving me hope and perseverance to travel through that dark space.

Music can help us celebrate the best of times in life, like birthdays and weddings. It can help us to relax as we listen to it at a concert or in the quiet of our own cars or homes. Even the light music we hear at carnivals and circuses initiates a "let's have fun" mindset for a time of fun.

Our son and daughter-in-law are licensed music therapists. They know the power music has to heal. Our Nicholas and Vicki have worked as music therapists with disabled children and watched them come alive in expressing themselves. Nick now uses music therapy as he works with people fighting from drug and alcohol addictions. Music therapy is used in hospice situations with people who are dying. It's used by some companies to help their employees deal with stress. Music is a powerful tool for healing.

This morning upon hearing the reading of Psalm 150, the last song in the book of Psalms, we are reminded of another significant, mysterious, emotional ability that the use of music gives us, and that is in communicating with God through the intimate part of our deepest soul. This psalm raises our awareness of the gift music gives us in expressing our praise to God.

The book of Psalms was sort of like the hymnal for God's Old Testament people. Psalm 150 serves as an excellent finale to this God-inspired hymnal. It begins and ends with the words "Praise the Lord" which in the Hebrew language is "Hallelujah."

The psalm instructs us to praise God everywhere, for everything, even his unimaginable greatness. It even conveys the message that should music inspire us to move, we should allow ourselves to dance our praises.

The idea of dance along with the use of a variety of instruments illustrates a very vital point about our relationship not only with God, but with also with each other. The psalm tells us to Praise God with everything, not just with our voices, but also with our being.

It reminds us that just as there is a variety of instruments that come together as an orchestra to create sweet music to God, all of us coming together through voice, thoughts and prayers, actions, missions—when all that we are comes together through all of our souls, we create an orchestra playing beautiful music for God. The music is such that it moves the congregation into the aisles with dance. It is a living expression, musical to God's ears, praise to God.

The mention of the trumpets in the psalm announces God's reign over us. The lute, harp, tambourine, strings, pipe lead us in a reminding liturgy supporting the fact that God is on the throne. Then use of the loud cymbals in two verses announces the climactic moment in the song that emphasizes and prepares the way for verse 6 that exclaims everything that breathes should praise God. Yes, all creation is summoned to praise God because God rules the world. We can see how nature does that through its beauty and movements. In the same way all humanity is to unite to praise God. That final verse to the whole book of Psalms, verse 6, which says, "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" is an eloquent reminder of the book's pervasive message: To praise God is to live, and to live is to praise God.

When I look back over my life, I can point to many examples of the inspiration and power music has provided in my life. I'm sure you can too. There are those musical pieces that when we hear them, they reconnect us with memories, some good and some bad. And just about the time I hear a piece of music and think I've heard the best thing ever, another inspiring performance or engagement with music comes along and tops it, like Ed Planks' singing the Lord's Prayer last Sunday. Wow!

But I want to share with you in closing, a true story that will forever touch my heart. At Fahrney-Keedy, I met a woman, I'll call Tashia. Tashia was a rough looking woman. Her voice was less than a delight to the ears. She was very hard of hearing and probably because of that, she was pretty much a recluse. I confess that like many others, I did not find myself drawn to her.

Then one day, during one of my weekly morning devotion times on the floor where she lived, the Holy Spirit led me as we sang "Jesus Loves Me," to get close to her and sing the song into her ear. Suddenly, her eyes lit up and she sat tall, and she began singing "Jesus Loves Me" with me and the others who gathered that morning for devotions. She came to life right before our eyes in a way that was so very beautiful. Many times, after that I would sing hymns into her ear, and sometimes she would try to sing along.

A special bond developed between us. I loved Tashia. My last day and activity at Fahrney-Keedy was on a Sunday at worship. Tashia was there, sitting in her usual spot on the balcony. After the benediction, I looked up at her, pointed to her and instructed the activities person to get close to her ear and sing with me, "Jesus Loves Me". Tashia's facial expression beamed with joy, and she began to sing with me and the whole congregation joined in with us. I'll never forget that moment. Moments like those surely prove that: music has power, and more importantly that, "to praise God is to live, and to live is to praise God. Amen.