

Welcome

CONNECT WITH GOD

We are FINALLY back in the book of Ephesians!

- Our last Sunday in Ephesians was the last Sunday we were all together under one roof!
- This morning we are in Ephesians 5

Because it's been so long (and because some online weren't with us 5mo ago), before we get to our text this morning, I want to give us a (thorough) recap of where we've been so far in this book and this series.

- We're currently in Part two of a three part series about the Kingdom of God.
 - PART ONE: Kingdom Kids
 - PART TWO: Kingdom Family
 - PART THREE: Kingdom Come
 - **ON SCREEN: Ephesians Recap**

The first section of Ephesians (Ch 1-2) is all about developing the Christian identity.

- Paul is pointing out and revealing these beautiful snapshots of what it means to be a christian. Specifically what it means to be a Child of God. As a Kingdom Kid:
 - You have been united with Christ. (Eph 1:3)
 - You are loved and chosen before the foundation of the world. (Eph 1:4)
 - You have been adopted as the beloved children of God into the family of God. (Eph 1:5)
 - You belong to Jesus. (Eph 1:6)
 - You are fully and completely forgiven of sin. (Eph 1:7)
 - You have been given wisdom and understanding. (Eph 1:8)
 - In christ you have been given a wonderful, eternal inheritance. (Eph 1:11)
 - And that inheritance is backed by the Holy Spirit which has identified you as God's own possession. (The Spirit is God's guarantee [of our inheritance]) (Eph 1:13-14)
 - You have been given "confident hope"
 - Your soul has been given purpose ("calling").
 - Not only have you been given an inheritance BY GOD, but you ARE the inheritance OF GOD! (Eph. 1:18)
 - You have been saved by grace. (Eph. 2:4)
 - Not only that, but you have been RAISED with Christ and SEATED with Him in the heavenly realms! (Eph. 2:5)
 - You are an example of the wealth and grace and kindness of God. (Eph 2:7)
 - You are the masterpiece of God. You are His finest craftsmanship. (Eph 2:10)

- ▶ You are a NEW CREATION. You have been made brand new. (Eph 2:10)

And then midway through Ch.2, Paul zooms out his lens a little bit.

- ▶ He's still talking about identity, but now he's focusing on OUR identity as the kingdom family of God. Who we are as His people.
 - ▶ Jew and gentile are now ONE people under Christ. A new, holy race of people. (Eph. 2:14)
 - ▶ God has brought reconciliation and peace between peoples. (Eph 2:15)
 - ▶ Those who were once outsiders (the gentiles) have been grafted into God's family and have citizenship in the Kingdom of God. (Eph 2:19)
 - ▶ Together, we make up the house of God (a holy temple), built upon the apostles and prophets, with Jesus as the cornerstone. (Eph 2:20)
 - ▶ The inheritance that Paul mentioned in Ch1, is EQUALLY SHARED between all members of God's family. (Eph 3:6)
 - ▶ The Kingdom Family of God is a demonstration of His multi-faceted wisdom, even to the angels in Heaven. (Eph 3:10)
 - ▶ As His family, we have been given bold and confident access to the presence of God (Eph 3:11)

And then in Chapter 4, Paul pivots from identity to instruction.

- ▶ This perspective shift can best be summarized by:
 - ▶ **EPHESIANS 4:1 (NLT)**
Therefore (in light of everything that you are as a child) I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.
- ▶ Called: *Kaleo* = to be called BY NAME.
- ▶ Literally: "Live a life worthy of the NAME that God has given you."
 - ▶ *Live into your identity.*
- ▶ This verse is a very important bridge between our identity in Christ and how we live in response to that identity.
- ▶ An effective christian life requires the balance and harmony of these two things.
- ▶ What we do in and for the Kingdom is always a response to who we are in the eyes of King.

Our passage this morning deals with one aspect of how we respond to our identity in Christ.

- ▶ We're going to be looking today at verse 19, but for context, I'm going to read verse 18-21
- ▶ I'll be reading this morning from the New Living Translation.
- ▶ The title of today's sermon is **The Kingdom Family Choir**

EPHESIANS 5:18-21 (NLT)

18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, **19** singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. **20** And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **21** And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

PRAY - Give us Heart for musical worship / Participate

A couple of quick disclaimers before we jump in:

- ▶ We are going to be mostly dealing with the first half of verse 19, which is centered around the gathering of the church in musical worship.
 - ▶ Worship is not limited to the act of singing, but singing together plays a very important role in how we worship God, and this is what Paul is addressing in our text.
- ▶ Also, I'm aware that addressing the subject of corporate musical worship in our current context might feel a bit strange, since we're currently not gathering corporately.
 - ▶ But...this doesn't mean that we shouldn't address the subject.
 - ▶ Our ability (or inability) to gather together in one place doesn't actually limit our ability to sing together.
 - ▶ It just looks slightly different than what we're used to.

In fact, the church that Paul was writing to probably looked a lot more like our **CURRENT church context than the one we've grown accustomed to...**

- ▶ The Ephesian church was not some mega church with a big sanctuary or lights.
- ▶ It was people gathering together in households and small groups under the threat of persecution from the roman empire (REAL persecution—they could be killed for what they believed)
- ▶ So just because our big church gatherings are on hold doesn't mean that these words don't apply—in fact they might apply **EVEN MORE!**

The last verse we studied in the book of Ephesians was v18, which was specifically focused on the idea of drunkenness.

- ▶ "Do not become drunk with wine for that will ruin your life (dissipation/wastefulness). Instead, be filled with the spirit..." (V18)
- ▶ In other words: Don't waste your life with things that don't matter, but instead be filled with the Spirit.
- ▶ Because the lesser things in life that we "drink" will ultimately end up drinking us...

- ▶ And that is contrasted with the idea of being filled with the Spirit. "Instead be filled..."
- ▶ The Spirit of God doesn't drink you up, the Spirit of God fills you up.
- ▶ The Spirit doesn't dull you to the things of this world but awakens you to the things of the Kingdom.

And then we get to our verse today (v19).

- ▶ And it's important to note that there is in fact a comma at the end of verse 18.
- ▶ These are not separate ideas!
- ▶ This is one fluid, comprehensive statement that Paul is making here.
- ▶ **Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.**

There is an inextricable connection between Spirit and Song.

- ▶ There is a direct relationship between being filled with the Holy Spirit and the practice of singing.
- ▶ And not just any kind of singing (as we see in the text)
- ▶ This idea of singing together. Singing to one another and with one another, collectively as one. Encouraging one another through melody, lyric, and rhythm.

Paul places a great deal of significance on the practice of signing within the kingdom family of god.

- ▶ There is something about singing together that is vital to the life of the Christian and to the life of the Church...

So this morning I want to address the question: Why do we sing? What is it about singing that is so essential to the Christian experience? And why is it so so important that we sing together?

- ▶ There are three things that I would like to draw our attention to today:

1. Singing together in worship synchronizes our hearts to God and one another.

In 2013, researchers in Sweden conducted a study in which they measured the heart rates of a group of 15 singers as they performed a variety of choral works, including the popular hymn, *Fairest Lord Jesus*.

- ▶ What they found was that as the members of the choir sang in unison, their pulses began to rise and fall at the same rate.
- ▶ In other words, as they sang together their physical heartbeats began to synchronize together.

- ▶ This synchronicity didn't just happen arbitrarily.
- ▶ The cadence of the music and the rhythm of the lyrics required each member to inhale and exhale at the same intervals.
- ▶ Their heartbeats became synchronized together AROUND the LYRICS that they were singing.

In the same way that our physical hearts become synchronized by singing together, so do our spiritual hearts become synchronized when we worship together.

- ▶ There are so many things in our daily life (Culture, Media, News Cycles, Relationships, work, even good things) that can produce a kind of spiritual arrhythmia in our souls. We find ourselves out of sync with God.

But when we (as the people of God) come together in musical worship that is created for God, centered around God, and sung to God, there is a beautiful, supernatural recalibration of our hearts *with* God and one another.

- ▶ Calibration means "to bring something into conformity with a set standard".
- ▶ In a symphony orchestra, every instrument in the ensemble is tuned (calibrated) to a specific note—specifically the "A" note played by the oboe.

This is certainly true of what worship does in our hearts. When we worship,

- ▶ The heartbeat of our soul begins to sync up with the heartbeat of God.
- ▶ Our desires become realigned with His desires.
- ▶ Our motivations become realigned with His will.
- ▶ Our perspective and our worldview begins to align with the way God sees things.
- ▶ Even the tempo of our lives (often busy, fast-paced, frenetic) begins to synchronize with the tempo of the Kingdom of God (which is often much different than the pace of our lives).
- ▶ Have you ever showed up to church stressed out? And then worship starts? And your soul slows down? That is your soul being recalibrated to the steadfast rhythm of the kingdom.
- ▶ Or maybe during a season of disappointment or discouragement, you suddenly felt an overwhelming, unexpected sense of joy during a time of musical worship. That is your soul being tuned to the harmonious frequency of the kingdom.

As (fallen) human beings living in a fallen world, we are in regular, constant need of spiritual recalibration.

And while musical worship is not the ONLY way to recalibrate our hearts—we can do that in a variety of ways (bible, prayer, fellowship)—often musical worship is the MOST EFFECTIVE way. Why?

- ▶ Music actually bypasses the logical part of the Brain.
- ▶ The marriage of melody and lyric and rhythm actually circumvents the part of our brain that is responsible for analytical processing and goes straight to the limbic circuits of the brain that govern our emotions.
- ▶ Music can access our emotional being more quickly and effectively than other mediums or methods.

A couple years ago, my wife and I went to a John Williams concert with some close friends of ours.

- ▶ If you don't know who John Williams is, just watch *Star Wars*, or *Indiana Jones*, or *Jurassic Park* or basically any major blockbuster film made in the past 40 years - he scored it.
- ▶ And the Emcee for this particular concert just so happened to be Steven Spielberg, who directed many of the films that John Williams scored.
- ▶ He was setting up this section of the concert where they showed a scene of Indiana Jones, first without any music at all, and then again with the orchestra playing the score behind it.
- ▶ There was a stark emotional contrast between the scene *with* the music and the scene *without* the music.
- ▶ At the end of that demonstration, Spielberg said this:
- ▶ *"Music directs the traffic of our emotions"*

I love this picture of what music does, because it's so true!

- ▶ Our emotions are like vehicles. They're VERY POWERFUL vehicles that can move in ALL KINDS different directions.
- ▶ And like vehicles, our emotions need direction. We need roads, and highways and signals to direct our feelings and our desires to the proper place. And music is VERY good at this.

LUTHER: "We can mention only one point (which experience confirms), namely, that **next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise**. She is mistress and governess of those human emotions....which as masters govern men or more often overwhelm them....For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate....what more effective means than music could you find?" - *Martin Luther*

Musical worship (songs, hymns, spiritual songs), are so important to the Christian experience because it helps guide and direct our emotional traffic to the place it needs to go—the throne of grace.

- ▶ Let me demonstrate this...grab guitar
- ▶ Musical worship can move our hearts from:

- ▶ Bitterness to tenderness as we sing of the sacrifice that was made for us on the cross (Man of Sorrows - My debt is paid)
- ▶ Apathy to activation as we sing of God's heart for salvation. (Spirit break out - King Jesus...)
- ▶ Unbelief and doubt to confident hope and trust as we sing of God's faithfulness and His promises. (Yes and Amen – I will rest in Your promises / My confidence is Your faithfulness)

Do you see how musical worship calibrates the heart of the worshiper to the heart of God?

- ▶ To be clear: It's not the music itself that has the power to change the spiritual nature of the heart. But music can powerfully lead our hearts to presence of the One who can.
- ▶ Music can't inherently transform our hearts (only the presence of God can do that), but in the context of musical worship it can transport our hearts to the presence of God.

When we worship God through music, an emotional experience is not the goal.

- ▶ Musical worship is actually the practice of bringing our emotions and our desires (what the Bible calls the 'heart') into alignment with and submission to the truth of God's character and nature.
 - ▶ EXAMPLE: I'm dealing with what feels like an impossible financial situation, and I'm experiencing significant fear, anxiety, doubt (emotions) about whether or not God is going to show up and provide.
 - ▶ And on the screen is the lyric "For I know You are faithful my God"
 - ▶ In order for me to sing that lyric honestly...sing...it requires that those emotions (fear, doubt, anxiety) be brought under the authority of Jesus.

This kind of emotional processing happens almost subconsciously.

- ▶ My emotions are being dealt with without me even having to think about it.
- ▶ And before I know it, my heart is being moved to the truth.

This is how music recalibrate the heart of the worshiper.

2. Singing together strengthens and cultivates unity among us as a family.

A different study was conducted by a team at the Keck Graduate Institute that measured the neurology of those who participate in group singing.

- ▶ They discovered that those who sang together experienced a significant rise in the hormone oxytocin

- ▶ Which is known in the scientific community as the "love hormone"
- ▶ Oxytocin is released in the body when we experience love—when we experience deep connection and social bonding with others.
 - ▶ It's the same physiological reaction as if you were snuggling with your husband or wife or dog.
- ▶ That is what happens when we sing together. We actually experience deep connection with one another.
- ▶ God created us this way.

This might sound really scientific, but you know how this works. Think about the last sporting event you went to (when you could still do that)

- ▶ What happens before every sporting event?
- ▶ We sing the national anthem. Or at least we used to.
 - ▶ Nowadays we hire professionals and artists and pop-singers to do the "singing" part, and most of us just kind of sway along to the melody.
- ▶ But there was a time that the people were responsible to carry the tune of *The Star Spangled Banner*.

National anthems exist to stir up unity among those who sing it.

- ▶ That's why we sing them in arenas and stadia and before the Super Bowl.
- ▶ It's a reminder of our national identity.
- ▶ For a brief moment we feel strangely connected to the thousands of other people singing with us, even though we don't
- ▶ National anthems remind us of our shared citizenship—that we as individuals (even in our many differences) belong to something greater than ourselves. That we are a part of a greater and grander story.

When we come together and sing anthems of praise to God, we are reminding ourselves and one another of our spiritual citizenship.

- ▶ That collectively we as the followers of Jesus belong to something (and someone) greater than ourselves.
- ▶ That the story of our lives is a part of a much grander one that God has been writing on the earth for millennia.
- ▶ We remind each other through singing that though we might be different in many ways, we are united by the same faith in the person of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ Worship reminds us of what Paul declared in Ephesians 2:
- ▶ **EPHESIANS 2:20**
"[we] are no longer strangers or foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints."

And if *The Star Spangled Banner* can stir up unity among citizens of America, how much more can worship stir up unity among the citizens of heaven?

- ▶ How much more does worship reveal to us that we belong to something (or someone) greater than ourselves?
- ▶ How much more does worship remind us that the story of our lives is a part of a much bigger story that God is writing on the Earth?
- ▶ *And* How much more does worship unite us around the hope that each of us has found in the person of Jesus Christ?
- ▶ When we fix our hearts on Him through worship, it reminds in a powerful way that we are united by something that is infinitely stronger than any finite thing that could ever divide us.

Many of us are familiar with the the communion story. But I want to look at the way Mark's Gospel describes it.

▶ **MARK 14:22-26**

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." ²³ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." ²⁶ **When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

- ▶ And "when they had sung a hymn..." It's so easy to miss. It's almost a passing note in the story.
- ▶ But it's SO IMPORTANT! The very last thing that Jesus did with his disciples in the upper room, was sing together. Why?
 - ▶ The disciples were in desperate need of unification.
 - ▶ The disciples had been bickering among themselves about which of them was the greatest.
 - ▶ And then right before the passover meal Jesus drops a bombshell in their laps..."One of you will betray me."
 - ▶ I can only imagine the kind of skepticism that befell the disciples in that moment.
 - ▶ Peter looking at John..."is it you?"
 - ▶ John's like..."No!"
 - ▶ This was a moment of deep confusion, mistrust, and DISunity for the disciples...
- ▶ And so when Jesus wanted to codify the unity of His disciples...When he wanted to seal the last supper...he did it through musical worship.
- ▶ Because singing has the power to bring unity among the family of God.

We see an incredible snapshot of what ultimate unity in worship looks like in the Apostle John's revelation of Jesus Christ:

▶ **REVELATION**

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

When God brings every tribe, tongue, and nation together in unity...what does it look like? It looks like musical worship.

3. Singing together is a supernatural resonance of God's Glory.

Everything God commands in scripture is to this end—including this command—to sing to and with one another.

Look at this guitar for a moment.

- ▶ This instrument has been carefully created and crafted to produce an array of resonant notes.
- ▶ It has complex curves and caverns that allow sound to reverberate out into the world in a way that is sonically beautiful pleasing to any and all within earshot.
- ▶ And the sound of this instrument is produced by strings...
- ▶ Strings that have been designed and created to be tuned and tensioned in order to resonate at a specific frequency.
- ▶ Not only that...these strings were made to resonate in conjunction with other strings in order to produce a beautiful complex sound.

This is God's Church. This is our church. This is God's beautiful and well-crafted instrument.

- ▶ And you, Christian, are a string on that instrument.
- ▶ Your life has been tensioned and tuned by the triumphs and tragedies of your life—your sorrows, your joys, your achievements, your failures—all of it.
- ▶ Your soul resonates at a frequency that is completely unique.
- ▶ Because no one on earth has lived your life.

- ▶ No one has experienced the exact same things you've experienced in the exact same way you've experienced them.
- ▶ When you open your mouth in song—even though you might be singing the same words and notes as the person next to you—a spiritual melody comes out that can't be duplicated by anyone else.

And when the Church comes together in worship (whether it's in a sanctuary, or a backyard, or the beach or a living room), God shows up among us and in His love and grace and power, He strums His instrument.

- ▶ And we, His people, His beautiful strings filled with the the Spirit, resonate with praise and thanksgiving (as it says in verse 20)
- ▶ We RESONATE with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that give thanks and praise and honor and glory to God the Father.

The sound that an instrument makes testifies to the skill and mastery of its maker and the musician who plays it.

- ▶ And so too does our worship testify to the wonder of the master musician of the universe.
- ▶ This is why God's people have been making melody together for thousands of years.
- ▶ To testify before God and to one another of His goodness and glory.
- ▶ To proclaim to our city (and to the nations) of the power and love of the everlasting God.

Because the most powerful instrument in worship is not a guitar or a keyboard or a drum set. No

- ▶ The most powerful worship instrument that exists is the voice of God's people resonating in response to who He is and what He's done for us.
- ▶ This is why we sing and why we do it together.

I want to end this morning by sharing the story of the most powerful worship experience I've ever had.

- ▶ It wasn't in a packed sanctuary with a booming sound system.
- ▶ In fact there were no musical instruments involved.
- ▶ Myself and six other interns from Reality had the opportunity to preach at a place called the Bible Tabernacle in Saugus.
- ▶ It was a transitional living facility for men who had recently been released from incarceration.
- ▶ For six weeks in a row each intern would prepare a sermon on the same verse in Galatians
- ▶ On the drive we would draw straws, and whoever got the short straw had to preach.
- ▶ But the preaching wasn't what I remember most from that experience—it was the worship.

- ▶ Each Thursday night before the sermon, one person in the congregation would get up in front of the group with an old hymnal and then the rest of the men would just call out page numbers and song titles.
- ▶ And they sang.
- ▶ I've never felt the presence of God like I did in that room.
- ▶ And it wasn't because it was loud. It wasn't because they sang on pitch. Or in perfect rhythm.
- ▶ It was powerful because I could hear the resonance of their lives.
- ▶ I could hear the full weight of their testimony in every single word that came out of their mouths.
- ▶ I could feel the pain, and the heartache, and the struggle, and the redemption, and the freedom, and the joy in every syllable of those songs.

When God's people resonate like *that*, it's an undeniable, supernatural resonance of God's glory.

- ▶ Even though you might not carry a story as heavy as those men, you do have a story.
- ▶ God has invited us into this. This is what you were made to do.
 - ▶ God has put His very own breath in your lungs
 - ▶ God has put spiritual power in your vocal cords to testify of His glory.
 - ▶ God made the resonant cavities in your head to reverberate like the halls of a temple.
 - ▶ And God put a mouth on you to shape that sound into a melodious testimony of who He is and what He's done and what He wants to do.
- ▶ Christian You do have a voice. And it's the only one like yours. So don't hold it back.
- ▶ You're part of the choir. Let your voice be heard.
- ▶ Whether you're at church, at the beach, on the streets, or with a small group in your backyard.
- ▶ Let the voice of God's people be heard all around!

PRAY - (Open mouths, Participation, Healing of minds and voices)

We have the opportunity to put this into practice right now during the second set of worship.

- ▶ I know that we're not all together in one place this morning, and we can't hear unified voice of the church like we used to.
- ▶ But we ARE all together. It just takes a little bit of faith to see it and hear it.
- ▶ For the next 20 minutes, a sound of praise is going to rise up all across Ventura County, and California, and wherever anyone is watching.

The Kingdom Family Choir

- ▶ Anthems of hope and light and life are going to be heard in our neighborhoods right now...if we open our mouths and sing.
- ▶ It can be so easy to be a spectator in worship, ESPECIALLY when you're sitting at home watching worship on a TV screen.
- ▶ Last week Dom shared that there are no spectators in the kingdom of God. And that most certainly includes worship.
- ▶ You've been called to something greater. You've been called to joyful participation in the family Choir of the kingdom.
- ▶ Let your voice be a part of ONE voice to the praise, glory and honor of Jesus Christ our Lord.

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_music_bonds_us_together

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/choir-singing-improves-health-happiness-%E2%80%93-and-perfect-icebreaker>

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/blogs/the-science-behind-why-choir-singing-is-good-for-you-1.4594292>