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*This way forward*

## MAKING YOUR DAY IN THE GODLY WAY: WITH THE MELODIES IN OUR HEARTS

Ephesians 5:15-20

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As one author observed, “The Christian Church was born in song.” (Ralph Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*). Simple, evident truths, when they are sung, gain another layer of meaning, resonance, power, and “reverb”.

If I simply said, “I want Jesus to walk with me.” You would say, “Okay. That’s nice; next topic.” But if I sung with all my heart and soul, “I waaaaant Jeeeeesus to walk with meeeee! I want Jesuuuus to WALK with me!” It takes the words and attaches them to our innermost desires.

Some of the things we think and say as Christians are too great, too profound for simple speech:

*“Jesus Christ is Risen today!”*

*“Ah, Holy Jesus, How Have You Offended...”*

Because of the power of music, Paul has challenged us to make melodies in our hearts. The first week in Ephesians, we explored how using our words can build others up rather than break them down. This week, we are exploring how turning our words into melodies can connect each moment of our day to God’s presence.

Walking through the day, literally with a song in your soul, will serve to put you on the right path. But it is not just any song or tune meant to pass the day. Paul tells us it is a song in our heart whose melody is given to God.

A melody is a series of notes played in purposeful order that creates something greater than simply the sum of each note. A melody is a multiplier of sorts.

Think of the various blessings you have each day; the warmth of the sun; the fertility of the earth that brings you food; the air to breath. From there the list becomes more specific to each of us. I have a loving wife to sip coffee with, a fantastic church in which to serve, and a clear purpose in my life to

work at building the kingdom of God in Spartanburg.

Each of these blessings is a single note in the tune. Piecing them together, in a tapestry of memory, magnifies the significance of each one. The melody in our hearts is a piecing together of known blessings that, when placed alongside each other, creates a sense of greater joy than any single blessing could do on its own.

The Jews have a song known as the “Dayeinu”, translated, “It would have been enough.” It recounts the various acts of God that brought them to the Promised Land.

Dayeinu - It Would Have Been Enough

*If He had rescued us from Egypt,  
but not punished the Egyptians,  
It would have been enough. (Dayeinu )*

*If He had punished the Egyptians,  
but not divided the Red Sea before us,  
It would have been enough.*

*If He had divided the Red Sea before us,  
but not supplied us in the desert for 40 years,  
It would have been enough.*

This is the smallest beginning of the song that dates back more than a thousand years. As the verses add up, the sense of God’s profound generosity and love magnify.

We begin making melody with our hearts to God through counting those simple blessings we take for granted,

It would have been enough had I air to breath  
and food to eat;

it would have been enough had I roof over my  
head and loved ones to embrace;

it would have been enough had I a job to earn  
my place with a profound purpose.

For each of us the list goes on and on. Note the variety Paul includes, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” No need for us to fight over which genre of music is most divine. The Bible includes them all. But Paul was not just giving us literal instruction.

He was inviting us to take all the different aspects of our life. As your day is happening, make a melody out of it; set it to music in your heart. Even the hard stuff. Remember the “Cleanup” song? *Cleanup, Cleanup. Everybody cleanup!*

I hate cleaning! But suddenly, the preschool teacher has even turned drudgery into a game through song.

Sometimes melodies have discordant notes just like our day. We need those discordant notes to add depth and integrity to the music. Paul tells us to “Give thanks to God the Father at all times” This one is hard, but it is an essential part of the discipline of making your day in the Godly way. If you do it through melodies in your heart, it will grow a certain confidence in God’s actions even when things are difficult.

Give thanks for the traffic jam! For the dropped egg! For the spilled milk! Of course!

You couldn’t be stuck in the traffic jam if you didn’t have a car. You couldn’t drop the egg or spill the milk if you didn’t have food or drink. And, I can assure you, the air conditioner would never break if you didn’t have one!

Granted, making a melody is hard work! At times composers agonize over each note because it is more than just notes set next to each other; the order, the intensity, the duration, the silence in between the notes all impact the hearing. The silence can be the most important part of the composition. Just like in our day it gives one a moment to absorb all that is happening.

Here are the thoughts of one would-be composer:

I’ve researched my question on Google before and came across a few threads which

I’ve read a couple of times. So far I’ve got into music theory and understand scales, how chords are formed, I know what intervals are in terms of half steps apart...but I can’t seem to tie the information to create my own melodies.

So, making a melody is not as simple as knowing theory and applying it. There is something to a good melody that “sings” so to speak. A good song has a part of the composer or singer in it and it captures the soul of the singer and the hopes of the listeners.

To make a melody out of our day means connecting the day’s events with the depth of our being. It is this melody, whether a literal or figurative song, that lights up our soul, connecting it to the Holy Spirit. That is why it is essential to include the hard parts of our days. It leaves nothing on the table when we go to God.

As Porter Taylor observed, “*Worship redeems time.*”

Making a melody turns our day into worship which, in turn, redeems all those parts we thought were pulling us down. Now, they can be used to draw us in; draw us in closer to God. It changes that moment that broke us down into one that can build us up.

Note the weird contrast that is so true... “the days are evil” and “give thanks in all things”! Paul was writing in a time, much like ours, in which evil and confusion are all around. He saw some of the worst parts of human nature. But he did not sink into cynicism or despair. No. Instead he said, “Rejoice always, again I say rejoice!” We remember Paul literally sang hymns of praise to God in prison!

It might be easy to mistake this type of melody making, of both the good and the bad, as facile optimism, but not if You have a proper understanding of the sovereignty of God. Because Paul handed ALL THINGS that happened to him over to God, a pattern emerged – a melody of sorts. The melody of God’s making, which is the grandest composition in the history of the world.

Otis Redding is no musical slouch. “These Arms of Mine” and “Sitting on the Dock of the Bay” are monuments to 60’s soul. But, his most enduring composition found its fame not from his own voice but from that of Aretha Franklin: *R-E-S-P-E-C-T, Respect, Respect*.

She sung that song with her whole soul (and you have to listen to Otis Redding sing it to realize how much she made it her own), expressing her longing and that of millions of women and African Americans for their rightful place in American society.

But it did not come easy. Despite her phenomenal success, she lived the hardship so many do. As one commentator observed,

Franklin’s life despite all her later success, had not been easy. Her mother was rarely in her life, and her father’s popularity took him on the road much of the year—not to mention the insistent demands that daily face the pastor of a major church. She had two children at a young age, both out of wedlock, and suffered through a series of bad marriages and abusive relationships.

(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/august-web-only/aretha-franklin-died-tribute.html>)

But, being true to Ephesians, she made a melody with her life. She brought pieces of her soul, her life, the good, the bad and wrapped it into song in a way no other had in modern times. Of course, her roots were in gospel, not popular songs, and when she sang the faith, it brought millions with her. One musicologist said that her rendition of “Amazing Grace” “hints at ‘mysterious’ incandescence.”

Now none of us are Aretha Franklin. But, like her, we can bring all of ourselves, the good, the bad, before God in the song of our hearts and God will redeem it all when, like Aretha, we see him face to face. Amen.