The Sound of Music
Revelation 5:8-10; Daniel 3:4-7
Sunday, June 18, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction: The Hills are Alive

The other day I looked up "youtube" and watched Christopher Plummer and the kids, and later Julie Andrews sing "The Hills are Alive" from "The Sound of Music." It's a great song and it made me feel better just hearing it a couple of times. Music has that effect on us. We hear it from radios all the time. Our favorite songs never get old to us as they touch our souls in some way. I believe music is designed to do just that, to be the language of the soul. It not only encourages us but it also allows us to worship in a way that goes beyond the spoken word. With music our souls reach the heart of God. Music is the perfect vehicle for worship.

- Set the stage
  Daniel 3:4-7

In our passage from the Book of Daniel, we find the great Nebuchadnezzar, inflamed by ego and temptation, commanding his empire to worship him when worship belongs to God alone. His monstrous folly blinds him to the sacrilegious nature of what he is doing, but even he understands that deep worship involves music. He organizes an orchestra to start and accompany the people as they sing to him.

  Revelation 5:8-10

Later in Revelation we find musical instruments in the very courts of heaven. Jesus, the only one worthy to open the scroll of destiny, does so with the accompaniment of angels and elders and the prayers of the saints who sing "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." It was only fitting to participate in the august moment with music.

- Main Point: Music is the language of worship

Music is the language of worship, and it infuses all the great acts of God. People from the Reformed Church of America put it this way: "From its inception,'when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy' (Job 38:7), to its consummation, when 'every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them' will sing to the Lamb on the throne (Rev. 5:13), creation is musical. 'All nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres." Human music-making participates in the music of creation and reflects the order, beauty, and diversity of God's creation.*

- Application: Worship is possible without music but it is not easy to reach and will not go as deep as worship with music. Cf. Sweet Hour of Prayer

There's a wonderful promise in Scripture (2 Corinthians 5:8) that says, "we are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." As I read that verse, I find a promise that once my soul leaves my body, I am escorted into the presence of Christ. Using a little bit of poetic license, the writer of a great hymn brings that marvelous truth home with great power. "Sweet Hour of Prayer" (#413) has a funny line in verse three: "Till, from Mount Pisgah's lofty height, I view my home and take my flight." It is as if the writer got permission from the Lord to take a detour and view Israel from the mountains of Pisgah, which was as close to the Promised Land of Israel that Moses was allowed. He saw the earthly Promised Land denied to that great man and then flew to the eternal Promised Land offered to us by grace in Christ. It's hard to sing that and not get emotional. The same is true to the modern song that includes the words "It's your air in out lungs, so we pour out our praise." Such is our dependence on God and that is driven home by music.

- Conclusion

Music touches the soul and is the perfect language of worship. It connects us to God in ways that are powerful and unique. It is present in false worship, in true worship and in all the great acts of Creation and it is in constant use in the courts of heaven, and we can use the same means to worship Christ and encourage ourselves this very day.

*https://www.faithward.org/the-theology-and-place-of-music-in-worship/