

**04.21.24 ~ Easter 4**  
**“Music and the Arts”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**2 Samuel 6:1-5** <sup>ESV</sup>

<sup>1</sup> David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. <sup>2</sup> And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim. <sup>3</sup> And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, <sup>4</sup> with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark. <sup>5</sup> And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

**Colossians 3:12, 15-17** <sup>ESV</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience . . . <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Leader: These Are the Creative Words of God! All: Thanks be to God!**

**Exodus 35:31-33** <sup>ESV</sup>

<sup>31</sup> and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, <sup>32</sup> to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, <sup>33</sup> in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft.

**2 Chronicles 2:13-14** <sup>ESV</sup>

<sup>13</sup> “Now I have sent a skilled man, who has understanding, Hiram-abi, <sup>14</sup> the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre. He is trained to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, and in purple, blue, and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and to do all sorts of engraving and execute any design that may be assigned him, with your craftsmen, the craftsmen of my lord, David your father.

**Leader: These Are the Creative Words of God! All: Thanks be to God!**

**Please pray with me:**

Creative God, we are grateful to be in your presence this morning, exploring your creative spirit and how we may creatively find beauty in new ways of music and the arts. Lord, since it is such a huge topic, I ask you to focus our minds and thoughts on the bigger concepts and our gratitude that we have various forms of the arts built right into our DNA, thanks to your wisdom. As you transformed Zacchaeus as we

heard last week, transform us today and every day to draw us closer to you in all we do, both practical and creative. We still rejoice at the resurrection and seek inspiration through these scriptures; may your voice be heard through this messenger. Amen.

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Thank you again to Chaplain Anne Smith for her message last week and to you for making her feel so welcome. Hospitality is an important part of worship, especially when we have guests. She expressed her gratitude to me for letting her share an important message about Jesus' humanity and his acceptance.

Why do we and other Christians come to worship each week? Some out of obligation, routine, and some congregants come out of responsibility and a love of the church and the body of Christ. Some attend weekly as if Sunday is a social club for which they have paid membership dues. Some attend because they love God and Jesus and want to draw closer to them in a quiet, sacred place for an hour or more. A great many come for the music, architecture, litanies, prayer, the beauty of the décor or stained-glass windows (think Cathedrals), or for the fellowship of others. Some churches create an atmosphere of sacred awe, while others create a mood of entertainment with loud bands, expensive light shows, fog machines, clapping, and dancing. None of these reasons are bad in and of themselves, but if the motivation for worshiping is wrong or misplaced (I want to see my friends, for example, or let's party! Or I have to go because . . .), then a consumer mentality becomes an incorrect and inappropriate vehicle for the institution of church, interpreting Scripture, and finding healthy, spiritual reasons to live out

our faith. We then become focused on marketing and promotion, rather than ministry, but that is for another discussion.

The main (but not only) reasons we should be attending weekly church services are: 1.) we are to love God above all others as the first commandment teaches, and worship helps us remember that; 2.) we need to continue our Biblical and theological education; 3.) we sometimes need re-fueling to love and serve our neighbors, the second commandment teaches; 4.) we feel a desire to share our own faith experience with new or other believers in testimony; and finally, 5.) we were formed in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) and therefore have a creative need to express our love and faith through hymns, anthems, music, drama, poetry, liturgical dance, craft, art, flowers, beauty, and more.

We seek beauty, fulfillment, awe, and inspiration. As we participate in the elements of worship, we experience both the divine and humanity, as we invoke the Holy Spirit's presence and invite others to participate in various roles: usher, greeter, choir, helpers, teachers, nursery, and instrumentalists. As we heard in today's passages, musical instruments were part of daily Biblical life and worship, especially during celebrations. Music was used for both sacred and secular purposes. Some scholars think that our David passage of moving the ark was almost a Dionysian orgy; but that is not proven. They had just defeated the Philistines and were ecstatic to have protected the Ark of the Covenant! We know from other Scriptures that David was physically expressive in his joy. The 2 Chronicles and other passages cite ceremonial occasions of gratitude or joy, like harvest festivals, birth of new sons, or using the shofar to call people to Passover or worship, as we did this Easter.

Singing is and was another musical expression of joy or lament; look at the Psalms and the many references to rejoicing. Singing was sometimes choral (2 Chr 20:21; Ex 32:18-19), solo (2 Sam 23:1), *a Capella*, responsive (1 Sam 29:5; Ezra 3:10-11), or accompanied by other instruments, as we do today. We must rely on archeological evidence through found instruments (some of which are still functional like cymbals), discovered mosaic artifacts depicting musicians in action, or from historic accounts written after the fact, like from Josephus Flavius, Philo the ancient writer of Greek philosophy, or from the Dead Sea scrolls at Qumran. The most common instruments were clay rattles, round frame drums, double pipes, Egyptian lyres, Hellenistic harps, lutes, shofars, and other horn or bone pipes. Since music was connected to dancing and other sinful acts, it went out of favor in the Reformation church, but it is interesting to look at timelines of sacred music, from the chants in the Medieval monasteries, to the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods until the recent past and today. Late Baroque composers with divine gifts and skills, who we recognize as Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi, used Scripture to inspire and connect us with the divine (think Hallelujah chorus or Faure's Requiem later is late 1800's). I recommend looking up Music in Eerdmans's Dictionary of the Bible or on a google search. Perhaps we'll do a teaching series in the future, eh, David?

The visual arts are also such a broad topic that the research is more challenging in Biblical history and demands more than this introduction. Archaeological finds have produced what we might call "craft"—pottery, clothing, instruments of creation or tools of the arts like brushes, knives, chisels, mosaics, beautiful tile pieces, hieroglyphics, petroglyphs,

drawings, and paintings on cave or cliff walls. This craft is what we read in today's second set of passages; craft in Biblical times had an elevated meaning, but sometimes today, it is not considered as lofty as the "fine arts" like painting or sculpture. Just look at our museums, but that is an opinion; it is sad and inappropriate to me, because craft helps us learn more about our society and daily life. The Renwick Gallery has done a superb job of blending craft and art. If you do either, you are an artist and called a "creative." All this for a future discussion.

Back to art history in the church. Much of our early Christian art is iconography (like last week's bulletin cover of Zaccheaus in the tree) created in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and is called Paleo Christian art; the Byzantine period of Christian art is from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, but most of our familiar sacred art like the images I put on the bulletins and you see at the National Gallery of Art, is later and are interpretations of Scriptures or Bible stories during the Renaissance period or later.

Modern discoveries of art forms like pottery, jewelry, or sculpture, which I saw a lot of at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, has given us information about the locales, the clay, soils, firing techniques, patterns, and tastes of the Persian and Hellenistic periods in the Bible. We learn what tools were used and how they ate, drank, dressed, worked, and took care of daily needs. The architectural and archeological remains are ongoing new discoveries, so there is more to learn about Christian art history. In our lifetimes, there has been art as well, so what has this history to do with our worship? Art and the Christian faith is important for communication, interpretation, teaching adults and children, and for inspiration. Taste is important in the arts to elevate our thinking and our

decision-making, but we are not here to judge types of music or types of art. We are here this morning and every Sunday morning for different reasons, but a consistent purpose is to seek beauty as a God-given value and characteristic in our worship setting, our liturgies, music, art, messages, teaching, our speaking with one another, and in our application of what is learned; this beauty that we must create and must find is essential to living, almost like breathing, and not just on special holidays! So, as we continue to explore this year's theme, let us think about it in terms of worship and how we envision a divine and human beautiful worship setting and service. Amen. ||

**Let us pray.** Dear Lord, we thank you for the beauty of creation, both made by you and made by humankind. May we see with fresh eyes the beauty around us in buildings, furnishings, clothing, paintings, quilts, gardens, music, instruments, and life itself. Bless our efforts to refresh our worship and setting for the use of our Mission Center partners and us, as we celebrate with music and the arts. Help us to be faithful to the right motivations of love, beauty, justice, and mercy. We pray in Jesus' name, **Amen.**