

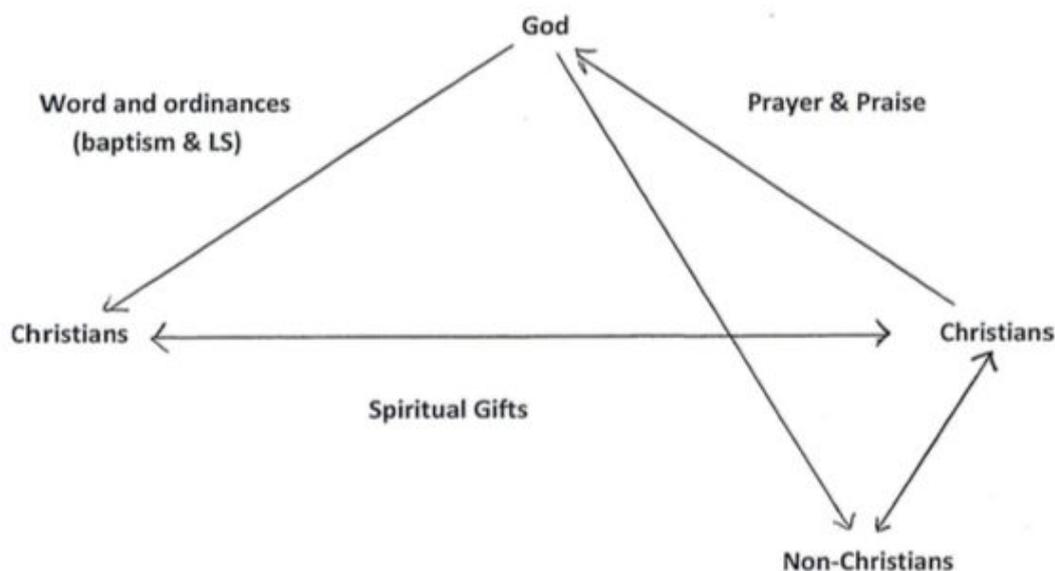
CBC Topic - Singing

Sunday evening, 29th April 2018

Will Cockram

Recap:

- All of life is worship - we are to be 'living sacrifices' in response to God's mercy (Romans 12:1).
- We gather to engage with God (vertically), to encourage and equip one another (horizontally), in view of a watching world.



1. Why do we sing?!

1.1. Because it's what *people* do

Not surprising - we're created in God's image

- Zeph 3:17
- Heb 2:12
- Eph 5:18

1.2. It's what *God's people* do response to salvation

1.2.1. Miriam - Exodus 15:20-21

1.2.2. Moses - Deuteronomy 32

"Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. 47 They are not just idle

words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

- 1.2.3. Deborah and Barak - Judges 5 (after the defeat of Jabin king of Canaan - so that the world hears!)
- 1.2.4. After David has killed Goliath - I Samuel 18:6
- 1.2.5. The Psalms!
- 1.2.6. Hebrews 13:15 *“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.”*
- 1.2.7. Heaven - Rev 5:9-12

1.3. Because we are commanded to:

*“Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish **one another** with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, **singing to God** with gratitude **in your hearts.**”* Colossians 3:16

*“...speaking to **one another** with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make **music from your heart to the Lord.**”* Ephesians 5:19

1.3.1. To God with gratitude

- Because God is worthy of our praise
- Because he delights in our praise
- Because it’s one way we engage with Him
 - Praise
 - Petitions (of all kinds)

1.3.2. To one another - edification and encouragement

- We teach one another
- We exhort one another
 - *“Oh church arise”*
 - *“Take it to the Lord in prayer”*

1.3.3. From (and to) our hearts

- Singing together helps us to *know* truth
 - Learning it
 - Memorising it
- Singing together helps us to *feel* truth (engages the emotions).

“Music helps us feel a feeling, words help us think a thought, singing helps us to feel a thought.” Yip Harburg.

- 2 historic dangers to avoid:
 - Emotion/less - Light without heat.
 - Baby out with bathwater
 - ‘UnChristian’ view of a person?
 - Emotionalism - Heat without light - could you replace the words with any old words and still feel the same?

“When sacred words are combined with pleasant music then our souls are moved and are moved.... with a warmer devotion kindled to piety than if they were not so sung.....I fluctuate between the danger of pleasure and the experience of the beneficent effect of singing...”¹
Augustine

- Singing together helps us to *express* the truth of our experiences together
 - The variety of the psalms
 - Psalm 13:1 - *“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?”*
 - Psalm 61:10 - *“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.”*

2. So, what does that mean for our singing?

2.1. What we sing matters

2.1.1. Is it true?

“Music has a secret and incredible power to move our hearts. When evil words are accompanied by music, they penetrate more deeply and the poison enters as wine through a funnel into a vat.”² Calvin

2.1.2. Is it understandable and clear?

2.2. The way we sing matters

2.2.1. We need to *be there* to sing

2.2.2. We need to *sing* to each other, even when we don’t like the song/music, or you’re just not a very good singer.

2.2.3. We need to be able to *hear* each other

2.2.4. We need to be able to *see* each other

¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, xxxiii, 50, p. 208.

² Cited in H. R. Van Til, *The Calvinist Concept of Culture* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1972), p. 110.

2.2.5. We need to be *near* each other

2.3. The music we use needs to help *our* singing - it is *congregational*.

2.3.1. The tunes we sing

- We need to *be able* to sing the tune.
- We need to *want* to be able to sing the tune

2.3.2. The music we use...

- Needs to serve the lyrics
 - The style/dynamics/etc need to 'fit'
- Isn't a performance.
- Should be done well, with an 'undistracting excellence'.
- Isn't essential, but it does help.

*Spurgeon then added, 'We'll sing it to the tune "Refuge"'. The organist leaned over from the gallery, and whispered to the preacher, "It is not in our tune book, sir.' 'Then it ought to be,' answered Spurgeon; 'no tune book is complete unless "Refuge" is in it;' and, turning to the congregation, he said, 'The last time I was here, you people praised God for yourselves, but now you have a machine to do the praising for you. If I can't play "Refuge", we'll have it all the same, and I'll start it myself.'*³

2.3.3. The need for humility

- Different musical preferences
 - Beware making your subjective preferences objective!
 - Beware making it a primary/divisive issue.
- Different musical gifts
- Impossible to please everyone
- Bearing outsiders in mind.

*"Music is a vehicle for proclaiming the Word of God... the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [God's word] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words."*⁴ Luther

Q & A

³ C. H. Spurgeon: *Autobiography: Volume 2* (Banner, 1973): p. 441.

⁴ Martin Luther, 'Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae*' (1538), pp. 321, 323-324.