

What is A Musical Memory You Have?

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord...” - Psalm 66: 1-9

As someone whose first career was as a jazz musician, and as someone who was the music director of a church for almost a decade, I have a thought or two about music. The word means, "art of the muses" and people who study it believe that music dates back to times before writing. Archeologists have found primitive drawings in caves of stick figures playing flutes and people dancing around drums. Music is as old as language itself.

I mean, where would we be without music to help us get through our most difficult and celebratory moments? Could you imagine there being no music at the ballet, or on the radio, or at a wedding or a funeral. Could you imagine watching a movie without music to underscore it?

For example, there we are watching a movie about a fisherman on a boat and all of a sudden we hear, *da, da... da, da... da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da* [*Jaws movie theme*] and the anticipation in our bones rises. Or we are watching a movie about two rivals running in the Olympics and as they are about to make it past the finish line, we hear [*theme to chariots of fire*] and even if we don't like running or the Olympics we are moved and inspired. Or we are at a funeral and we hear *Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand...precious Lord, lead me home* and suddenly the loss hits us. Music takes whatever is happening to an emotional level. I often hear you saying you love when I play my guitar and perform a sermon song. It's not because of the sermon part, it's because of the song part! It's because we just don't hear music, we feel it.

Perhaps it is also why there are so many Psalms in our bibles filled with celebration and praise. Full of their stories of God's liberation movements put to a soundtrack. Full of their ache-filled blues to God about feeling afraid and angry and abandoned. Because there are some things that words just can't tap into. Inside the sanctuary of our rawest feelings, we don't just hear music, we feel it.

I remember being at a concert of a famous band who played to a sold-out stadium of about 40,000 people. For their encore they came out and played their most popular song. The crowd went nuts. Electricity filled the air. But then something interesting happened. Halfway through the song the band stopped, the singer held the microphone up in the air and the crowd of 40,000 people began to sing the rest of the song acapella. I mean, everyone was singing. The harmonies, the rhythm, the words, all of it was there. The song was in our bones and we felt like we were part of something far beyond ourselves. It sounded so out of this world, that the band let us finish the song on our own and as the song ended in silence. There was this...sacred pause. A breath that said we had no words for the holiness in the air. Just before the roar of the crowd began you heard a universal exhale. I've experienced many powerful musical moments in my life, but none like 40,000 people singing acapella. By the way, the word acapella literally means, to sing like the church.

There is something about music. What is a memory you have about the power of music, or singing? Or what does music do for you? You have a few minutes to share around your table. When is a moment you just didn't hear music, but you felt it?