

Nehemiah 12:27-47

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Date: 08 September 2013

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[0 : 00] We'll continue our work today through the book of Nehemiah. I believe after this morning we'll have one more sermon in the book. and I hope that it's blessed your heart the way it has mine over this past few weeks.

Nehemiah chapter 12. Now to give you just a brief summary up to this point, catch your mind up to speed for this morning. God has brought His covenant people home to Israel after 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

Remember, they were carried off into captivity because of their sinfulness. Because of the way they had disregarded God's law. And so they were taken captive and led away. They've been brought back now.

A couple of different movements coming back. But they're home now in Israel, in the promised land. And they've now refinished rebuilding the temple we see in the book of Ezra. And now the wall surrounding Jerusalem here in the book of Nehemiah.

There's been a great revival that I believe started prior to chapter 8. But we certainly observe it take its full swing. In chapter 8, it's broken out amongst them. In this past few weeks, we've observed together the evidences of God-sent revival.

[1 : 08] That revival is not something that we put on a calendar or on a sign. We don't pitch a tent across from Kroger and Gainesville. That's not revival.

But that God brings revival. A special returning of His people to Him. And we noted that if revival is God's sin, God's people will be praying.

That they will reestablish the Word of God as the ultimate authority in their lives. I hope you at least have a copy of it with you this morning. That they will recognize their defiance of God and view His chastisement as just.

They'll quit making excuses and justifying the things that they do. But they'll recognize that they have not observed God's law as He requires. And they'll turn from that defiance to obedience. They'll say, God, in all ways I want to honor You. If Your Word says it, I want to do it. And I will work to that end. This is a mighty work of the Spirit in the hearts of men.

[2 : 10] But it is something we ought to be endeavoring to do. And as we see these things happening in our lives, we can certainly say that the Spirit is at work and moving in our hearts.

We see here in Nehemiah that the Spirit draws the sword from the scabbard. And has His work, has His way with His people. And it has been my prayer for us that the same will be true.

That we'll no longer be complacent Christians. But that we will devote ourselves to God the way He deserves our devotion. Now this morning I want to draw our attention to the dedication service for the wall that we see recorded in chapter 12, verses 27 through 47.

But I don't want to totally neglect chapter 11 and the beginning of chapter 12. There is some significance there. And there may even be some significance beyond what I'm about to share with you. But for us today, I think the significance we need to see is this.

Chapter 11, verses 1 through 2. Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring 1 out of 10 to live in Jerusalem, the holy city. While 9 out of 10 remained in the other towns.

[3 : 24] And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem. A number of weeks ago we talked about the fact that the wall had been built and yet nobody lived in Jerusalem at that time. The thing that ultimately grieved Nehemiah's heart, as we see recorded in chapter 1, is that the city was in ruins.

And as such, the state of the people of God looked horrible. Their capital city, the place that should have been the center of all activity and trade, the place where the temple was located, no one even

inhabited it at this time.

And so they rebuilt the wall for the glory of God. Not for protection, but for the glory of God. But yet people still didn't come in to live and dwell in that place for his sake.

But we see here now a correction of that. So remember in chapter 7, I spoke to you, verse 4, it says, The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.

And then in verse 73 of the same chapter, So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants in all Israel, lived in their towns. And when the seventh month had come, the people of Israel were in their towns.

[4 : 31] They had yet to reoccupy the city. And to say to the nations around them, God is certainly good to his people. So it's important for us to see that they've now made reparations for that.

They have fixed that now. They have now sent people into the city to live. Now, verse 3 in chapter 11 through chapter 12, verse 26, I just want you to get one thing.

It is a massive list of names. And this is what I want you to get from it. God has set apart for himself a covenant people. People group. Here it was Israel.

Now it is the church. It's us, right? But a people is certainly made up of individuals. And individuals matter. God is concerned for the individual, right?

Which means he cares for you. He cares for you. And as such, we should care for individuals. I've been encouraging you over some time just to get to know each other's names.

[5 : 31] There's a good starting point, right? And here we see a massive list of names of the people who came to occupy the land. So, we skipped a stone off of chapter 11 and the beginning of 12.

I'm sure there's some more depth to it there. But I want to get into this worship service that we can see in chapter 12, beginning in verse 27. So, let's read that together.

I'm actually going to hop and skip a little bit through it to avoid the burdensome nature of some of these names, both for my sake and for yours. So, bear with me as we do that.

And I'll give you some explanation as we go along here. So, beginning in verse 27. And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, they sought the Levites in all their places to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgiving, and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres.

And the sons of the singers gathered together from the districts surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Nataphatites, also from Beth Gilgal and from the region of Geba and Asmoth Beth, from the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem.

[6 : 34] And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall. Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks.

One went to the south on the wall to the dung gate. Verse 38. We're going to hop over this list of people that went in this procession along with this one choir. Verse 38.

The other choir of those who gave thanks went to the north, And I followed them with half of the people on the wall above the tower of the ovens to the broad wall, and above the gate of Ephraim, and by the gate of Yashana, and by the fish gate and the tower of Hananel, and the tower of the hundred to the sheep gate, and they came to a halt at the gate of the guard.

So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me. And then we're going to jump down a little bit further to verse 43, and we'll finish out the rest of the chapter.

And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. The women and children also rejoiced, and the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

[7 : 41] On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the law for the priests, and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns.

For Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered. And they performed the service of their God in the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon.

For long ago in the days of David and Asaph, there were directors of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers.

And they set apart that which was for the Levites, and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron. Join me in prayer. Father, we thank you for your word, your very spoken word, your breath to us.

And I pray this day that you will, by your spirit, apply it to our hearts. And don't let us just take these things in and have some mental understanding of the last part of chapter 12, but show us how it is that the activity recorded here for the nation of Israel means something for us this day.

[8 : 48] Help us, Father, to see how to rightly worship you. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Now, again, the observation here is a worship service set apart for the dedication of the wall.

And we've seen a couple of other worship services. This one consists primarily of music. That's a major activity in this particular worship service. We saw at the beginning of chapter 8 a worship service that was primarily the reading of God's word.

Half the day, teaching and reading of God's word. We see another in chapter 9, which consisted of the reading of God's word, and then confession through prayer. So we're seeing this mix of different types of service as they come together and worship God.

We have to be very careful as we talk about worship. And so we're going to spend a little bit of time this morning simply defining our terms. What do we mean when we say worship?

This is something that has been far misconstrued in the Christian church these days. When did the worship of God become just about music?

[9 : 57] Oh, that was wonderful worship this morning. What do people are referring to when they say that? The music. What do we call the guy with the guitar?

The worship leader. As if the only activity of the Christian life that is worshipful to God is singing songs. Shame on us.

This is a trite view of what worship actually is. When did this happen? I wish I knew. I want to do a sociological observation experiment. I wish I could see through history and see what happened.

I would expect that at some point the term music minister didn't apply to the skinny kid, Gene, getting up there with the faux hawk playing the guitar.

And they had to come up with a different term for him. Right? Because the music minister is a guy that leads music with his hand and puts together cantatas. Right? But I don't really know what happened. What has happened to our thinking about this term worship?

[10 : 57] Now get me, many of us say words and we're trying to communicate something and if somebody were to correct us we would say, oh well, I don't mean that. Many of us would do that.

There's a very important biblical teaching that simply says, out of the outflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

What you say directly connects to what you think about particular matters. Right? We go after you pretty hard about calling this building the church.

Right? Because it clearly communicates that in your mind the gathering of God's people is not about people. It's about institution. Building. Lights.

And trappings. It's not about that. It's about God's people coming together. We are the church. This is an example. Worship is another. It's a burr in my saddle. Let me show you why.

Hebrews chapter 12 verses 28 and 29. You can turn there if you want to. I'm going to go pretty quick because I have twice as many notes as I normally do on a Sunday morning. The writer of Hebrews says, Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

[12 : 04] He's just presented the gospel in a very clear way. And thus, let us offer to God acceptable worship. Acceptable worship. Is he talking about music here? No. With reverence.

Not relevance. Catch that. With reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire. Now, we are so quick when we're reading the scriptures to let these man-made divisions block our thinking.

But the writer of Hebrews didn't stop at that point, take a couple of week break, and then pick back up and start chapter 13 as an entirely different subject matter. He goes on to explain exactly what he's meaning when he talks about offering acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

Let's, just a quick summary. What does chapter 13 tell us we ought to be doing to worship our God? Let brotherly love continue. Show hospitality to strangers.

Remember persecuted Christians. Honor marriage. Be sexually pure. Do not love money. Be content. Imitate the faith of your leaders. Do not be led away by false doctrine. Bear the reproach of Christ.

[13:12] Acknowledge Christ with your lips. Do good. Share what you have. Obey and submit to your leaders. This is worship.

And what I fear happens is that when we think of music as the only thing that is worship to God, we neglect all of these things. Now, would music be found in this list?

Yes. It absolutely would. Right? We are to acknowledge Christ with our lips. And we do that when we sing together. John MacArthur, in a book I would commend to you called *Worship, The Ultimate Priority*, said, Worship is any essential expression of service rendered unto God by a soul who loves and extols Him for who He is.

Real worship, therefore, should be the full-time, non-stop activity of every believer. And the aim of the exercise ought to be to please God. That is worship. Our lives are meant to be lives of worship. As a person, you are always going to be worshipping something. You're going to either be worshipping the Most High God or something else. Yourself, sports, success, your wife, your husband, just relationships in general.

[14:25] You're always going to be worshipping something. Proper worship is worship of God. The Puritans had a principle they called the regulative principle.

the regulative principle. Excuse me, not the Puritans, the Reformers. Sorry, history buffs. Listen to what John Calvin said. I think this sums up the regulative principle well.

He said, We may not adopt any device in our worship which seems to fit ourselves, but look to the injunctions of Him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have Him approve our worship, this rule which He everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness must be carefully observed.

God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word. So I'm taking you now to talk about worship and life as general.

What He's saying certainly applies to that. Talk about how it is that we ought to worship together in our services. Right? Matthew 15, 8 and 9.

[15:29] Jesus said, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me. Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. As they're gathering together, they were doing things to worship that were man-made, man-created, ways in which we should worship God.

We've been given the instruction manual for how we ought to worship God. Certainly, it applies to how we worship God together. All of our service is worship.

This is a worship service. That's what we have come together to do. From the very beginning all the way to the end, that's what we have come to do. If anybody rightly gets the title of worship leader, it would be me because I take responsibility for everything that happens when we're together on a Sunday morning.

Right? Here in our text, who are the worship leaders here? I didn't read the name out to you, but we see a singer being led at the very end of verse 42. The singer's leader is Jezreiah.

Is he the worship leader? I would say to you, no. He was the leader of the singers. Nehemiah and Ezra, the men who were leading the people and put together this thing are the worship leaders.

[16:48] So this morning, I'm going to use the term musical worship because certainly our singing is that. And unfortunately, people have done two things if they're doing anything wrongly with music.

They've either made it, they've relegated it to a lesser thing. It's the thing we do in order to prepare ourselves to hear the word preached. It could be a way that you treat it.

I know this is true because I used to be that way. Especially when the whole praise and worship movement started coming out. I started to stop seeing the value in singing some of these songs that were being sung and I just bore through it so I could get to the teaching of the word.

Some of you may be that way. Others of you may make it too big of a deal. You may just bear through the preaching so that you can sing some more songs. Have your emotional tank filled back up.

Properly, our musical worship is worship of God. We should come together prepared to do this activity together. We should want to please Him with what we do together in song.

[17:54] So today I want to give you four characteristics of proper musical worship. Proper musical worship. And I want you to keep two questions in mind as we do this.

One, do you think rightly about musical worship? Do you think rightly about it? Do you understand what it is supposed to be and what it is supposed to look like?

And then secondly, do you participate rightly in musical worship? Do you think rightly about it? Do you participate rightly in it? One of the questions that kind of got at my mind though as I was looking at this is the question, is musical worship important to our meetings?

I would venture to say, I may be wrong about this, but I would venture to say that there is not a church in this nation that you would go to this morning that wouldn't sing in some fashion on a Sunday morning.

Why? Why do churches do that? Is it just that it's the thing we're supposed to do? We just know when we come together as a church, you sing. I don't know why we sing, but we sing. Some of you may feel that way.

[19 : 00] Some of you might stand stoically without uttering a word. I don't have a good voice. I don't want to sing. I hate the singing. Why do we sing in church? Is musical worship important to our meetings? If you were to be a careful student of the word of God, you could emphatically answer that yes.

Music is all throughout the Bible. From the very first book, there are hymns recorded, songs sung to praise God in Genesis all the way through to the book of Revelation.

Except for the book of Psalms, you know that Revelation has more songs of praise in it than any other? There's 14 songs. I don't have my 14 songs sung in the book of Revelation.

It is everywhere. Why were the Psalms even written? What was the very point of them being written? It was written to give God's people songs to sing together.

Listen to just a couple of examples of the Psalms speaking to this very point. Psalm 22, 22. I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will praise you.

[20 : 04] The picture in Hebrew of singing praise to God's name. Psalm 35, 18. I will thank you in the great congregation. In the mighty throng, I will praise you. Psalm 68, 26.

Bless God in the great congregation, the Lord of you who are of Israel's fountain. Yes, it's key. Yes, it should be done. John Calvin called the Psalms the anatomy of all the parts of the soul.

These songs have been given to us to relate to and express with and to understand some of the realities of God in our inner being, in our very emotion, the seat of who we are.

Laura Melendez put up on Facebook a cool quote from Jonathan Edwards this week, which was so timely, so I nabbed it and I put it in here. Jonathan Edwards said, the best, most beautiful, and most perfect way that we have of expressing a sweet concord of mind to each other is by music.

Hear that again. The best, most beautiful, and most perfect way that we have of expressing a sweet concord of mind to each other is by music. Martin Luther, a great reformer, said, next to the word of God, music deserves the highest praise.

[21 : 19] The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man so that he should proclaim the word of God through music. That's what we come together to do when we sing.

That's why the music isn't so loud that you can't hear yourself and the person standing next to you in this room. It's not a concert. Congregational worship and songs should look much different than a rock show, to be sure.

And this is all me. This is my quote. I just want to get myself in the mix with these guys. Singing is vital to our meetings because songs most readily, it's not the only way, but songs most readily unite our minds and our hearts.

We get the information packed in to our heads and songs help it unite with our heart. We feel the truth when we sing. At least I hope you feel the truth when you sing.

You ever wondered why we do two songs before the preaching and three songs after? Not that those are magic numbers at all, but the ways when we broke it up that way is because we want you to rejoice in the truth of the gospel after the preaching of the gospel.

[22 : 31] If you're not a person that really engages with lyrics on a screen, we want you to have heard it spoken to you so that you'll be more likely to have these things happen, to have your mind and your heart unite around these truths.

So yes, yes, music is important to our meeting together. All right, so first observation, proper musical worship is ordered.

Proper musical worship is ordered. Take a look at the activity of the choirs here. This is not something that just got suddenly thrown together in a spontaneous fashion.

There are some who think that musical worship ought to always be just spontaneous, right? That it just ought to come from the spirits leading and then somebody just starts playing and somebody

starts singing. Or that when they are in fact given a slotted time to sing, they go on and they go on and they go on and they go on.

And I'll tell you this, that a person that cannot bring a resolution to a song usually isn't being spirit-led, but they're not good enough to resolve a song. If they just play that chorus one more time, they're going to figure out how to end the song on that go around.

[23 : 41] Proper musical worship is ordered. Look at the activity of the choirs. The first part of verse 31, there's these two great choirs appointed to give thanks. The first group goes up on the wall.

We skipped over some of this, right? But they go up on the wall and they move in a counterclockwise direction. All of this record of the places they were passing by, if you understood the city, you would just know. He's just telling us the direction in which they flowed as they walked on this walkway that would have run around the inside of the edge of the wall.

That's what's going on here. I had to pull up a map and carefully plot the course and see what they did. You've got the first group that goes and they go counterclockwise around the wall. The second group goes up and they go clockwise around the wall.

The first group is led by Ezra. The second group followed by Nehemiah. And they come around the city and meet at the house of God. That's where we end up seeing them standing.

They stood in the house of God, you see in verses 40 through 43, offering great sacrifices and rejoicing. Most of our translations probably record the great number of choirs.

[24 : 46] Let me see if I can spot that real quick as I didn't make a note about it. Yep, yep, yep. Gather Together from the District's Rounding. Okay, anyway, there's a record of it being a great choir.

Okay, this is not speaking to the choir's quality of voice, that they were a well-trained choir, although I propose that they were, but speaking to their number, a massive number of people that were a choir that had to coordinate.

You've got two choirs getting up on the wall and singing and passing around and then going together and into the house of God. This was incredibly ordered. Right? So practice matters at this point, is what I'm trying to say.

Notice in verse 28, you see this interesting phrase, the sons of the singers. The sons of the singers. Is he referring here to those who were descendants of the singers?

That could be a possibility since we've now seen Israel go away and return from Babylonian captivity because these be the sons of the men who were singers before Babylonian captivity, now returned?

[25 : 51] No, that's not what he's talking about. This was common Hebrew language. To say sons of something was a way of saying in the order of. That it was their job.

It was something that was prescribed to them. It was their nature. They were the sons of the singers. You'll notice it again, a similar phrase in verse 47. You'll see the sons of Aaron.

Right at the very end of the chapter, the sons of Aaron. Were they descendants of Aaron? And certainly they were. But the point he's making here is that these were the priests. These were the ones who were in the priestly order.

They were the ones given the task of serving as priests. So we see men, potentially women here, that are specifically given the task. That was their calling to do this very thing for the people of God. Notice in verse 29. They've actually congregated together. For the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem as the people weren't living in Jerusalem. They had congregated together.

[26 : 50] And I would imagine that this was because they were practicing their skill. They were together. I don't know what kind of picture this brings up in your mind. Maybe for some of you it's robes and books in a room behind the sanctuary.

Them gathering together and honing their craft as they came together. I think of kind of hippie guys sitting around in their flip-flops in a circle playing drums and guitars.

But they were together in towns together working on this craft. They were prepared for this activity. We see no record of them having to go for weeks and weeks of practice so they could get together to lead this massive congregation.

30,000 to 50,000 people are back now from Babylonian captivity in the song. No, they were ready. They knew the songs and all they had to do was be coordinated in this movement around the city.

Notice in verse 47 that there was actually provision made for these singers. This was a job, a task, an official assignment given to them.

[27 : 52] Money, provision was set aside to care for them so that they could be better and better and better at their craft. We, for the size of our church, we are immensely blessed with musical talent.

Kind of blows my mind. I'm mentioning Lauren Melendez again. She won the Eddie's Attic open mic night, if you know that or not, which is a pretty incredible task. Yeah. Yeah, pretty incredible.

We have great, great talent here. What if, what if, wouldn't it be just fantastic if Wes, rather than having to show up at 8.30 on Sunday morning and get everybody together and get their talents on the same page together, what if he could spend more time in the week preparing and doing that to lead us in this very important aspect of worshiping God together in our singing, right?

This is something that the people of Israel recognized was important to set aside provision for the singers, for those who are in the order of singing. Just as an interesting side note, it says very little to do with what we're talking about here, but with that in mind, thinking of these people being the sons of the singers, we see the sons of Aaron.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus is called the son of God? Certainly he was born, we came into the earth that way, but it means more than that. To the Hebrew reader, they would have seen and understood that he was in the very order of God.

[29 : 12] He himself was God. His deity is found in that very title, being the son of God. I thought that was pretty cool when I discovered this this week. So, firstly, proper musical worship is ordered.

Secondly, proper musical worship is content-driven. It's content-driven. So we look at the job of these singers.

It's mentioned a couple of times. Verse 31, verse 38, verse 40. Their job was to give thanks. That was the work that they were about. But what was it that they were to give thanks for?

What is the very thing that they're praising God for? Verse 46 says, For long ago in the days of David and Asaph, there were directors of the singers and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.

They had songs that they were singing. There's a record of it here. That they had the very songs of David and Asaph. What are they referring to? The Psalms. They're referring to the Psalms.

[30 : 14] What would have been the major thing that would have been praised for David and Asaph? What was the major activity, the major praising of God in song? His person and his work in the Exodus.

Right? Psalm 105 is a really like perfect example of this. They praised him for the work he had done on their behalf. Right? His goodness to mankind has been evidenced in his work.

Right? So truth. That is what the songs were about. That was what they were returning thanks for, for the things that God had done. John 4, 23-24, Jesus says, The hour is coming and is now here when true worshipers will worship the Father in what?

spirit and truth. Not spirit and song. Spirit and truth. Not spirit and emotion. Spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth. Right? You know that this return from Babylonian captivity back to Israel became known as the second Exodus?

[31 : 26] That it was a another picture of God's goodness in that way? And you know that what we've experienced in Christ, a deliverance from the bondage, the slavery of sin and death, is known as the third Exodus?

These are the things that they and we are to be praising God for. The truth of the gospel. Who he is and how it is that he's displayed who he is to us.

Turn with me to Revelation chapter 5. We really ought to take cues from the scriptures, particularly pictures into heaven about how we ought to be praising God.

Doesn't it only make sense that we take a glimpse, John's vision of the praise that's happening in heaven, this musical worship, and go, oh, is that how it's done? We will model after that. This must have pleased God.

It's taking place in heaven where his will is perfectly accomplished. Let's ask for God's will to be done here in our musical worship. Revelation chapter 5 verses 9 through 10 and then 12 through 13.

[32 : 32] Here's the picture, the singing. What are they praising God for, giving thanks for? Worthy are you to take and open its seals. For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth. Verse 12. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

And then further down in 13. To him who sits on the throne, the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever. You see the truth, praising God for the good things he's done for us in Christ.

This should characterize our songs together. Now, that doesn't mean that we can't sing simple songs. I'm not suggesting that. We don't tend to sing many songs here that don't have a lot of words in them.

And I fully recognize that. Simple songs can be okay, but are they true songs? Is there actual content? Is there a weight in the content of the song itself?

[33 : 38] Many of you have heard me say, if you can replace Jesus' name or God's name in a song with your girlfriend's name, it really isn't a song to be sung in church. There should be some weight and some truth when we speak and sing praises to our God.

Let's look this morning at the bulletin insert we gave you. If you don't have one, look on with somebody else. Just take a look. Now you know why we printed these out today. Just take a look at these titles that Wes very carefully picked out for us.

Look at what he included. He included the scripture reference. The very words of God to us in song. That's what these are. If you know your Bible well, when you sing these songs, you can, oh, that is the scriptures.

I have read that. I know. I know what he's talking about. He's singing straight from the word of God. That's what the record of this is here. Look at the song we just sang, How Great Thou Art. First verse, praising God for his creation, his mighty works on man's behalf in creation.

Second verse, his redemption of our souls. Third verse, our final glorification. The fact that one day we will exist with him in glory perfected forever. You see the totality of the truth here.

[34 : 57] Many of our great old hymns, a lot of us probably grew up in Baptist churches where the songs were just too long, so we sang like the first, the third, and the fifth verse. You're familiar with that? But most of them were written very carefully to give us a broad spectrum of the gospel.

To take us from the very beginning, who we are, what Christ has done for us, how it is that we're continuing life to death, and what will happen finally and fully after that. They're beautiful pictures of the gospel.

So we unite our minds with our hearts as we sing true words together. That's why we do things that way. Now music, I think, should be good.

I think that if we're going to do anything to praise God, we should work at it. Right? As I noted before, music was ordered. They practiced. I'm sure this was a very pleasing sound.

We ought to strain at that. If you're in the congregation and you don't feel like you're a good singer, sing anyway, but try to sing well. You don't have to get in your own little zone and sing horribly off key, but if you can't sing on key, that's alright.

[35 : 59] Just sing. Right? It's good to try to hear the notes. It's good to try to know the music. It's good to do those types of things, but it's not the ultimate thing. That's not what matters mostly. So many of us are emotionally driven by music.

You recognize that that's part of our fiber, very part of our being. There's a reason that we're moved by music, that crescendo lifts our spirit. Right? But that shouldn't be the thing that causes us joy when we sing.

Right? It should be the truth of the gospel. MacArthur, again, in worship, the ultimate priority, said, Worship should engage the intellect as well as the emotions.

By all means, musical worship should be passionate, heartfelt, and moving. But the point is not to stir the emotions while turning off the mind. True worship merges heart and mind in a response of pure adoration.

Based on the truth revealed in the word, music may sometimes move us by the sheer beauty of its sound, but such sentiment is not worship. You catch what he said there? If you're simply moved by the beauty of sound, that's not worship.

[37 : 04] Music by itself, apart from the truth contained in the lyrics, is not a legitimate springboard for real worship. Truth. It should be content-driven.

Thirdly, proper musical worship is characterized by joy. It's characterized by joy. Content-driven, characterized by joy.

Look at verse 43 of chapter 12. It says, And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. The women and children also rejoiced, and the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Now here the record doesn't tell us exactly how it is that God made them rejoice with great joy, because it already did. Am I right? That's what the first 11 chapters have been about.

What God had been doing for the people, to make His name great amongst them. This is what God did to make them rejoice with great joy. Do you remember the taunts of Sanbalat and Tobiah, the opposers of the work of the wall?

[38 : 15] I know a lot of you weren't here. Turn back to chapter 4, the very beginning. I'll show you the taunts of Sanbalat and Tobiah. Verse 1. They're beginning the work on the wall.

Now when Sanbalat had heard they were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews, and he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves?

Will they sacrifice? Will they finish it up in the day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish and burned ones at that? He's mocking them. Look at these feeble, ridiculous Jews.

They'll never be able to accomplish this work that's ahead of them. And then verse 3. Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, yes, what are they building? If a fox goes up on it, it will break down their stone wall.

It's going to be such a poor and pitiful wall that even if a small animal, light-footed animal, were to get up on it, it'll just break down the stone wall. These are the taunts that they are experiencing.

Can you imagine as they marched an army of singers with men and leaders to follow them up onto the wall, and they marched around the entire circumference of the city, that through their minds they must have been saying, oh yeah?

[39 : 29] How about that, Tobiah? Chapter 6, verse 15 and 16 says, So the wall was finished on the 25th day of the month of Elul. In 52 days, the wall's finished in 52 days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

So see, all the people around them recognized this was a difficult work to do, to rebuild this wall. These poor, pitiful, feeble Jews rebuilt it.

It must have been done with the help of their God. And they were afraid. They stood in awe of who God was as a result. So these are the things that God had done.

God had made them rejoice with great joy, is what it says there in verse 43 of chapter 12. This is how he made them rejoice. Remember, again, the truth. The things that God had done on their behalf.

Now, all of this joy is for the glory of God. And in the same way, ours should do that. People who come into this place, even people who may claim to be Christians who aren't, or people who are just lukewarm in their Christianity, ought to come into this place and go, Man, that is a joy-filled people.

[40 : 45] They must worship a different God than I do. I am not filled with joy in the way they are filled with joy. What am I missing? And I hope that in the lyrics of the songs, and in our preaching, in our prayer, and Aletheia, all of those things, they see and they get it.

They go, That, it's the truth. It's the truth. I haven't been reveling in the truth the way these people revel in the truth. I need to do that more. I need to saturate myself with the truth of God's goodness to me, so that I will also overflow with joy.

Anyway, rightly understanding the gospel, beloved, will cause this to happen. It's not a negotiable thing. Like, well, it will if you're having a good day, if you're feeling all right, if you got plenty of sleep the night before.

This will, in fact, happen. And in fact, if you don't feel joy, and I'm not talking about jumping up and down nutty displays of joy, but if your heart isn't warm when you're singing songs, something's going on in your life.

Because the realities of the gospel aren't working themselves around in your heart. You fail to believe it, at least in that moment. Because if you truly understand who God is, who you are, this great separation between you, what Christ has done on your behalf, you will be filled with joy.
[42 : 04] Men, there's nothing more precious to me than men who sing and sing loud. I love it. I'm thankful that there's a very male presence in our singing together, for sure.

But we could do better. Don't stand and be stoic. Some of the most moving times I've experienced in musical worship with people is with somebody who does not sing well, but just sings. I love it. Two great examples in this congregation. My father. I love you, Dad. Don't have a great singing voice, but from an early child, I don't either, so I'm definitely my father's son. I'm a son of Jerry and the same type. But from a very early age, my dad just sang, and I always loved it. Because I knew that he believed what he was singing.

Clay has had two lung transplants. Clay doesn't have the ability, I think, to push good sound. He's coughed so much in his life from a CEF, and Clay is the same way. Clay is a little quieter in his singing because he can't push so much volume out, but Clay warms my heart because he sings.
[43 : 13] Men sing. If you think these things are true, sing. And I'll find in my own life that sometimes when I don't believe the truths of the gospel in those moments, that singing them helps me too. Just getting it out there.

I should believe this. I should. It's true. It's true. I know it's true. Sing. Our joy is an encouragement to one another. Congregational meetings matter.

You can't do what we do here in a building with the lights turned out, blacked out windows or no windows at all, and the music so loud that you can't hear anybody around you.

You can't do it. You can't be encouraged in the way we should be encouraging each other as we sing together. You matter in this setting. This is not a come and consume. Come look at the show, the concert, do all that thing.

You matter. In so many ways, before and after, but certainly as we worship God together in music, the people in front of you, behind you, around you, need to hear you sing, and they need to hear you sing with joy.

[44 : 14] It's important for our meetings together. If you think that you can properly praise God in musical worship with the congregation in the ways I've mentioned, blacked out, music so loud, just sit in your car and turn the music up.

It's the same thing. It's the very same thing. I hope you come together to praise with the people of God. And fourthly, I've got to move, sorry.

Proper musical worship is prepared for. Proper musical worship is prepared for. Notice in verse 30. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

They purified themselves. This was Old Testament ceremonial purification. What would this have included? It was all external things. It would have included the washing of their bodies.

It would have included the washing of their clothing, the abstaining from any sexual activity, fasting and prayer. It would have included a blood offering. This blood would have been sprinkled on the gates and the wall.

[45 : 24] That's what's being referred to in this case. Ceremonial purification was a vital part of Israel's worship. That's what the book of Leviticus is all about. So there's a lesser implication.

Of that reality that they prepared here, that we also ought to prepare to come together. That you ought to get up a little bit earlier. We meet at 1030. That is late in the morning.

You ought to get up and prepare yourself to come together. You ought to be ready to come and be joy-filled by the things that are happening. Be expectant to meet together with the people of God. You should be doing that.

But that's the lesser implication here. The greater thing that should be learned. We have to ask the question, what was all this for? Why was it that they did all of these external things to prepare themselves for worship?

It was to show them that God is holy, perfect, and that he must never be approached in a flippant, cavalier, or an impure matter.

[46 : 26] God is not to be approached in that way. So purification always preceded the worship of God. It was carefully ascribed in that way, in this very external way.

Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 6. beginning of verse 1.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. Isaiah is having a vision, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood seraphim, each had six wings, with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook, and the voice of him had called, and the house was filled with smoke.

So here we see Isaiah simply, we can't explain all this in the time we have, but beholding the glory of God. And look at his reaction, proper reaction. And I said, Woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

[47 : 47] Verse 6. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.

And then, verse 8, And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I, send me. Verse 9. And he said, Go and say to this people, we'll let it off there.

So Isaiah enters into the presence of God, recognizes his great sinfulness, and then symbolically, a seraphim comes and touches a coal to his neck and says, Your sins have been atoned for.

So there was a purification, but not an external purification, but an internal purification on Isaiah's behalf. His sins had been forgiven.

All of this Old Testament external cleansing was prefigurative. It was a shadow of the greater thing, the internal cleansing that was to come in Christ.

[48 : 50] It was meant to teach them and us that we cannot enter into the presence of God without the righteousness of Christ. So the greater implication of this for us is that proper musical worship begins with regenerate hearts.

You cannot not be found in Christ and have your worship be pleasing to God. You must be found in Him.

God will have nothing to do with you if you're not found in Christ. You cannot enter into His presence. All that God will have to do with you would give you some general grace now and then damn you forever for your rebellion against Him.

You can't do enough coming into the presence. Sing well enough, lift your hands, close your eyes, do all of those things to earn God's favor. You'll find His favor in the person and work of Christ.

That's a big question for us to ask ourselves this morning. If we desire to please God in musical worship, are your hearts regenerate? Have you in fact placed your faith in Christ?

[50 : 00] And I really hope that of every person in this room, we can say yes and amen. Absolutely. I ask that you ask the Spirit to search your heart in that matter. 1 Corinthians 6, verse 9-11.

We'll close with this. Paul says, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither the sexually immoral, the idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God?

And such were some of you. And such were some of you. But you were washed. You were sanctified. You're hearing the language? You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.

So do we think rightly about musical worship and do we participate rightly about musical worship? We would do well to ask ourselves those questions today. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Thank you.