

## **Give Thanks: For Music**

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – November 10 2024

24<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

**Readings:** Psalm 98; Colossians 3:12-17; Revelation 7:9-17 NRSVue

**Reflection:** Psalm 108

**Greeting:** Praise the Lord! Because it is good to sing praise to our God! Because it is a pleasure to make beautiful praise, let us sing to the Lord! Let us sing a song of praise! I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I'm still alive. Let my praise be pleasing to him; I'm rejoicing in the Lord! Let my song sing of my salvation! Praise the Lord! (Psalm 104 & 108)

**Prayer:** Almighty God, we give thanks for your presence with us as we join together by your grace and mercy. We are thankful this day for the music that we sing that brings us closer to you and lifts our spirits because of your hope. We give thanks for your steadfast love and faithfulness that are with us all the days of our lives. We put our trust in your word and your ways, that you may lead us in the path of righteousness. May you watch over us, Heavenly Father, and protect us from harm. May your Holy Spirit guide us in gentleness. And may we always be reminded of the example set for us by your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. May we always give thanks that you are our God and we are your people. Let us worship this day in a spirit of truth as we grow by your wisdom and your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 108

*<sup>1</sup> My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul! <sup>2</sup> Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn. <sup>3</sup> I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to you among the nations. <sup>4</sup> For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. <sup>5</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth. <sup>6</sup> Give victory with your right hand, and answer me, so that those whom you love may be rescued.*

*(Psalm 108:1-6 NRSVue\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 108, and we hear of singing to celebrate God. That the Lord has filled us with hope so we rejoice in song. That we should praise God for the his presence with his people. How are you giving thanks this week? What is the song that you sing in your heart this week? Who can you lift up in your prayers this week? How can you show others that you are thankful that they are in your life? What can we do to celebrate the love of Christ as we give thanks?

**Prayer:** O God, our guide and our guardian. We are thankful that you hear us as we lift up our prayers before you. We know that you are with us day in and day out, and that you never leave us. We give thanks to you especially for the music that helps us express our love for you. Help us to always be a people with hearts full of gratitude for the many blessings that we have in this life. We come before you this day with the joys that we have lifted up together. We turn to you with the troubles that we name together. But we also have celebrations and worries that we hold silently within our hearts. But you know our hearts Lord, and you hear the prayers that we share together on this day. May your steadfast love and faithfulness strengthen us in our mourning and our gladness. May we know that your presence is felt in our laughter and our tears. And may we always remember that you are there for us in all things. It is with grateful hearts that we remember your mercy and grace, demonstrated through the loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible Updated Edition. Our first reading is from Psalm 98.

*<sup>1</sup> O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. <sup>2</sup> The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. <sup>3</sup> He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. <sup>4</sup> Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. <sup>5</sup> Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. <sup>6</sup> With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. <sup>7</sup> Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the world and those who live in it. <sup>8</sup> Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy <sup>9</sup> at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98 NRSVue\*)*

Our next reading is from Colossians chapter 3, verse 12 through 17.

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <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; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs 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. (Colossians 3:12-17 NRSVue\*)*

Our final reading is from Revelation chapter 7, verse 9 through 17.

<sup>9</sup>After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup>They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup>And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup>singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." <sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" <sup>14</sup>I said to him, "Sir, you are the one who knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup>For this reason they are before the throne of God and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. <sup>16</sup>They will hunger no more and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat, <sup>17</sup>for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:9-17 NRSVue\*)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week, we look at being thankful for music. This is one of those things that's sometimes hard to explain. Because I really am truly thankful for music in my life. I'm especially thankful when I think about the way that it influences and enhances the way that we worship together. Because I think that music speaks to us in ways that are very special. Music reaches us in a way that nothing else does. Because of that, music is a very unique way for us to communicate our feelings. It can help us to express things that we might not otherwise be able to properly express. I mention all this because each of our readings today gives us a different feeling about music and a different way to understand the importance of music in our faith journey. Each reading tells us why music does matter.

Now, the first example that we have is from the Psalms, which themselves could be thought of as a songbook, much like our own hymnal. It is poetry and music, even if we don't always sing them today. But Psalm 98 in particular speaks about singing a new song to the Lord. In doing so, we remember all that God has done for us. That we should be happy and sing praises to God with instruments, raising our voices in unison. That the hills themselves are singing, with the waters clapping. That all nature sings the praise of the Lord. It is an image that we can understand because of the feelings we have when we sing. That we bring all those things together so that we can celebrate God. That we are called to sing because it helps us to really focus in on all of those things. It also helps us to be able to share in those feelings together. Because one of the ways that music helps us to express ourselves is by giving us a way that we may all sing the same words, and it helps us to experience that feeling together. And I think it's important that we're able to do that. Because when we read the Psalm, we aren't just reading words. We are hearing a celebration. A celebration that is very much like the way that we celebrate with music here.

We hear about this idea of singing more from Colossians, where we're hearing Paul talk about being kind and compassionate, helping each other. That as we find that love binds us

together in perfect harmony and we let the Word of Christ dwell in us, that we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And that we do it because they remind us of all of these things we are called to do. Because the songs that we sing remind us of what God has done. It reminds us of the way that God's love makes us feel. It reminds us of how we should treat each other. We can quote a line from a hymn and immediately have the whole song play in our heads. We can sing a familiar refrain and have others be able to chime in. That if I sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!" I know some of you have already finished it in your head or may have already sung it out loud. I can sing "On a hill far away" and not be surprised when people respond, "stood an old rugged cross." Because music speaks to us on that deeper level, and Paul understood that. He encourages it because it's also something that we can do as a community. Because music also brings us joy. That when we sing those songs, it does fill our hearts with a sense of warmth. And this was especially apparent to me because I have been getting ready for Advent and I had started picking out music. It's difficult sometimes to plan out music as part of a sermon series because I can easily get stuck listening to all of the songs. Because I read it through to make sure that I remember exactly how it goes and find myself singing them. Because the other thing that music does is brings about a sense of familiarity. Because it might be songs we sang as children, songs that have extra meaning for us, that have always been with us. They give us comfort because we know the words and we know the hope that it gives, and singing it centers us in Christ's peace again.

That's what we hear in our reading from Revelation. I included this one because it is a little different, but it's because they're singing, singing to celebrate God. They sing as part of their worship. They are singing because they have been redeemed and they give thanks. This image formed in my head of them around the throne singing as a form of worship. And why do they sing? Because God is their shelter and the Lamb is their shepherd, wiping away every tear from their eyes, guiding them to springs of the water of life. It's hope personified. It is thankfulness, and they express it by singing. I love that idea. I'm thankful for all kinds of music. And I say that not to downplay spiritual music and hymns, but because I often find Christ in the music I listen to. Because all music makes me feel something, and at the heart of those feelings is the love that I find in Christ. Because of that, I can see it reflected in the many different songs that I sing and listen to, because music helps us to connect to each other. It helps us to connect to feelings we might otherwise not be able to express. Sometimes music is used to help us express our grief and our sorrow. It helps us to express our joys and our celebrations. Music can help us to express feelings that we might not otherwise be able to name, and it helps us to give thanks. Because when I think about Christ, it does make me want to sing, and I'm thankful for that feeling.

I'm also thankful that music is there to help me cope with all sorts of things in life, and that it helps us to do it together, because music also gives us community. And I know that might sound weird at first, because anybody can sing in their car, they can sing alone, but the thing about music that gives us community is that music gives us a common way to speak together. When we sing out of the hymnal together, we are connecting with the words, with the meaning, and with each other because our voices resonate. We read the words, and we hear them from others, and we hear them in unison, and it gives us a richer experience. It brings

with it the rich tradition and the memories that surround that music. It reminds us of other times we have sung those words. And I think it does help us to connect with God. I think it does help us to be able to hone in on those feelings that are stirred. That's why things like all of our Christmas carols are so important when we think about what makes Christmas special, because it's not just that we hear them, it's that we sing along, and it gives us comfort. It grants us peace, and it helps us to find those memories that are bound together in song. And it helps us to connect. To connect with each other, connect with loved ones that are no longer with us, to connect over long distances and even beyond language barriers. Because when we connect with songs, we can understand each other. And I think that understanding helps us to love one another better.

So, I give thanks for music. I give thanks for all that it does to help us to think, to help us to feel, to help us to experience those feelings together. I give thanks that it gives us the words to worship, to praise and give thanks. I'm thankful for the words we need to celebrate and to mourn, and it helps us to focus on that feeling that draws us ever closer to our Lord and Savior with all that we are. Let us sing praises and let us make a joyful noise to the Lord. May we give thanks with music so that the whole world sings of the steadfast love and faithfulness of our God. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Our Current Series – Give Thanks

This last series before Advent looks at the many things we have to give thanks for. Each week will explore how we give thanks to God for all the many ways we have been blessed, both expected and unexpected. We will be looking at why we are thankful for those who have gone before us, for the music that we sing, for our failures, and for children. How do you give thanks to the Lord?

11/3: For the Saints

11/10: For Music

11/17: For Failure

11/24: For Children

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Worship 10:30am

### Toledo UMC

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Worship 8:15am

### Etna UMC

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