

The Worship Times

Musical Musings and the Method to the Madness

Daniel Brymer's totally random blog

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Oh the Joy!

Remember the time when Jesus went into the temple and found some guys in there who had set up shop and were doing business? What were they thinking?! Filled with righteous rage that His Father's house had been hijacked by these impostors, Jesus flipped over their tables full of stuff and literally drove them out saying, "Get these out of here!" Then He quoted Isaiah the prophet, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." The rest of the story, as Paul Harvey used to say, is found in the rest of that Isaiah passage. Here it is: "These I will bring to My holy mountain *and give them joy* in My house of prayer...for My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Isaiah 56:7 *emphasis mine*). What? Joy and prayer? Who knew?! I mean, really...aren't the prayer people in the church the ones that, well, we're glad they're doing what they're doing, but we don't much like hanging out with them? You know...they're not exactly party people.

Let's be honest – prayer, for most of us anyway, is not often associated with joy. Discipline?...Yes. Duty?...Yes. Should do?...Yes. Ought to do?...Yes. We-don't-do-it-near-enough?...Right! etc. etc. But, joy? Really? Well, there it is in plain English (or Hebrew if you care to read it in the original) – *Joy*, in the same sentence as prayer, and spoken by no less than God Himself!

Cutting to the chase here, let me state a premise: God's thing, done in God's way, will produce God's results. Fast forwarding from Isaiah to the book of Revelation we read in chapter 5 verses 8-9 about the 24 elders holding a harp in one hand and a golden bowl in the other. The text says that the bowls are filled with the prayers of the saints. So picture that – an old guy holding a harp, and a bowl full of prayer. Got it? OK, the question is, is that combination significant? I think it is. I believe God is showing us how prayer is done in heaven – WITH MUSIC! This is not the time nor the place to go into great depth on where else in the Bible music (singing, worship, praise, etc) and prayer are seen together. But believe me, that combination is there enough for me to suspect that God intended for them to go together – music and prayer. Or, for our purposes here, worship and prayer.

So back to the joy thing... After 40-plus years of leading worship and prayer gatherings, I can unequivocally say that doing worship and prayer together exponentially increases the effect and enjoyment of both. And I do not believe it has had anything to do with my own creativity. I believe it has been solely because I have tapped into, however unwittingly, God's way of doing it. Doing God's thing in God's way produces God's result. If my calculation is correct, the experience of joy in the ones God brings to His house of prayer, could very likely be linked to praying His way – and His way is with worship.

So where is this going? Glad you asked! All of the above in order to invite you into an experiment... For about 8 years now, our worship band has begun to play about 15 minutes before each of our Sunday services – 8:45 for the 9 AM first service, and 10:30 for the 10:45 AM second service. Recently we've added the prayer dimension to this pre-service worship time. To provide an onramp for everyone who'd like to participate, I have prepared a handout that includes a couple of worship songs we plan to do during that time, as well as 3 prayer themes – 1) For our church and its leadership, particularly during this time of transition, 2) For our missionaries, and 3) For our city, state and nation. The experiment is this: What could happen at Hillcrest if we do God's thing in God's way? Maybe Ephesians 3:20? So Sunday mornings, why not get to church a little earlier and jump in with us? Let's try this thing out! Grab a handout on your way in (just outside each of the sanctuary doors) and let's get in on heaven's worship and prayer session, no doubt already in progress. Oh...and don't forget your harp and your bowl.

Expecting JOY!

– Daniel Brymer