

**Foundations: The Music Inside You**  
**Exodus 3:16-17, 4:1-5, 10-13 (AFBC 8/14/16)**

“The Music Inside You”—some of you are probably curious about that title. If you’re a musician, I would assume you like the title. “Yes, I have music inside of me—and it’s just waiting to get out!” Good for you!

If you’re not a musician, however, that title could be a little intimidating. “Whatever music’s inside of me, nobody wants to hear. Probably best to just let it stay where it is.”

Well, let’s think about this in broader terms. The music inside you—as I’m calling it here--may or may not be musical, per se.

The point I’m making is that there’s something in each of our lives that God has placed there intending for it to get out. God does this because He knows that when it gets out, it will bless others.

This is clear in Scripture, friends, that God has placed gifts—aptitudes and abilities--in each of our lives. For some, it’s the gift of music.

Others either don’t have that gift, or as is often the case, they’ve yet to discover their musical gift. But if we are members of Christ’s body, we do have gifts; and the purpose of our gifts is to serve God and serve others.

Paul told us in his letters that the church is like a body. It has two eyes and ears, two hands and feet—and if either of the two is not working, the body is diminished in some way.

If just one part is not functioning, then the body is not being as effective as God intends. And if too many body parts are malfunctioning—and it really doesn’t take that many—then the body is in trouble—and that church won’t be effective at all.

In our text for this morning from Exodus, God is challenging Moses to use his gifts. He’s put music in Moses’ life that’s intended to be used to serve God and to serve His people.

Moses, however, does not yet feel ready to let this music out. Maybe some of us struggle with the same fears and hesitations

that Moses had—the kind that keep any of us from experiencing the fullness of life that God has in mind for us.

Let's listen to Moses' story and see if the way he overcame his struggles might inspire us to do the same (**Exodus 3:16-17**):

**16 "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.**

**17 And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.'....(now to chapter 4:1-5)**

**Exodus 4 <sup>1</sup> Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?"**

**<sup>2</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. <sup>3</sup> The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it.**

**<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. <sup>5</sup> "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you." ....(Down to verse 10)**

**<sup>10</sup> Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." <sup>11</sup> The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? <sup>12</sup> Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." <sup>13</sup> But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."**

Isn't it amazing how often the Bible becomes a mirror? Here we thought we were looking at Moses, and all of a sudden, we're seeing ourselves! "Good Lord, let somebody else do it—you KNOW I can't sing!!!"

There was a very talented man, a famous violinist, of whom it was said he could hold his listeners in the palm of his hand as he performed great works of music.

On one occasion, as he stood playing before a captivated audience, he suddenly paused. Right in the middle of a beautiful selection, he stopped playing.

In the awkward quietness of that moment, he took the violin from beneath his chin, he raised it in the air, and then smashed it to pieces on the floor.

The audience was stunned—horrified really. But then the violinist walked to the front of the stage and said quietly, “Don’t be alarmed. That violin was one I purchased for just a few dollars in a thrift store. I shall now play... the Stradivarius.”

He took that priceless instrument from its case. He tuned it for a moment, and then began to play.

The music was magnificent; but actually, to the majority of those present, what they heard was indistinguishable from the sounds they had heard earlier on the inexpensive violin.

When he finished, the violinist addressed the audience once again. “Friends,” he said, “so much has been said about the value of this violin in my hands that today, I wanted to impress upon you the fact that the music is not in the instrument. The music is in the one who plays it.”

Well, if that seems a bit over-dramatic, I suppose it was. Still, there’s a point to be made with this story. We all have talents. We have gifts and abilities—every one of us!

Our talents are not equal, of course, just as the two violins were of unequal quality and worth. Some may have Stradivarius gifts, but most of our abilities are of the thrift store kind. In other words, they’re more common. (Note: Ideas from “Outliers” book)

What is accomplished through those gifts, though, is a matter of what’s inside the person who possesses them. It’s the internal stuff that makes the difference--things like a willingness to work,

to practice, to apply one's self, and, of course, our desire to be used of God.

Moses is perhaps the most impressive figure in all the Old Testament. He casts a longer shadow than any other person across the history of Israel.

Granted, his accomplishments are not to be understood apart from the Lord's enabling strength and guidance; but even as an instrument in God's hands, his achievements are remarkable!

Let's consider his story again. At the time of his calling, Moses was growing old as a simple shepherd who was on the run from "the Law." You recall how he fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian slave master who had been abusing one of Moses' kinsmen.

Now Moses was tending his father-in-law's sheep out in the wilderness, far removed from civilization. It's not likely that he saw much significance to his life. He was a common shepherd—and you couldn't get much more common than that!

So I guess it's understandable that Moses was rather confused when God came to him—of all people! God asked him, "Moses, what's that in your hand?" Well, it was just a shepherd's staff. Every shepherd had one.

But God told Moses to throw it down. Perhaps Moses expected it to splinter—sort of like that violin--but it didn't. The staff turned into a snake. So Moses ran--he would've preferred splinters!

When he stopped running, though, God told Moses to go back and take that snake by the tail. This... was a real test of faith, folks.

The Bible doesn't tell us how long it took Moses to carry out that assignment; but in time, he did. And the snake... once again... became a staff.

After that bit of excitement, God told Moses that his staff--this simple tool that Moses had possessed all along--would from that time forward serve as a sign to the Israelites of the presence and power of God in Moses' life.

Friends, we're all gifted. God has put His music in us, so we already possess abilities that can be used for God's glory.

That shepherd's staff—Moses had been using it all along—but for his own purposes. Now, it was to be used for God's purposes! Moses had to understand the difference—and so do we.

We hear a lot today about gifted children and the special educational opportunities they have. Certainly there are individuals who are uniquely gifted; but make no mistake: we're all gifted. We have gifts that can be used to bless someone else.

So, the problem is not the lack of gifts; the problem is that our gifts may go unnoticed—even by us! Perhaps we haven't seen our gifts... as gifts. We haven't recognized the potential in whatever it is that we, with God's help, are capable of doing.

Could it be that we are like the boy whose simple lunch fed a multitude? He only had two fish and five barley loaves, but Jesus blessed and used this little sack lunch to feed a multitude! Small gifts always become greater when they're entrusted to the Lord.

I believe God sees to it that all His children are given opportunities to discover and develop their gifts. He provides the circumstances in which my gifts and yours can be used for His glory.

Think about it: it would be poor management on God's part if, after giving us these abilities, He never gave us a chance to use them. But He does! It's up to us to seize these opportunities and to be good stewards—good managers--of our talents.

After a rather lengthy debate with God, Moses made the commitment to use his gifts for leadership in the way God desired. There was much discouragement and many hardships along the way, but Moses never seriously looked back. His commitment was solid. He dedicated his gifts to what God was doing in the world.

Now, as Christians, God's call to us is revealed in the life of Jesus. Whatever else we may claim about Jesus, he clearly lived his life for others. He was committed to people. We consistently find Him in the Gospels using his unique gifts to serve those in need.

Being good managers of our abilities, then--following Jesus' example--must mean that you and I will dedicate our gifts to serving others. Unfortunately, though, our natural tendency is to use our gifts to serve ourselves.

In our materialistic culture, practical wisdom says, "I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones." But Christian stewardship always cuts against the conventional grain. It claims there's a better way, a more fulfilling and liberating way to live, and that is to invest our lives in others.

You remember what Jesus told us: that when we serve others, even the very least of these others, we're serving Him. This is really our greatest motivation for service—if we're followers of Christ: our greatest motivator is the opportunity to serve our Lord and Savior by serving one another.

A. E. Whitham wrote a parable about a man's visit to heaven:

"In my wandering," he said, "I came upon the museum in that city of our dreams. I went in and an attendant conducted me round. There was some old armor there, much bruised with battle.

Many things were conspicuous by their absence. I saw nothing of Alexander's or of Napoleon's. There was no Pope's ring, nor even the inkbottle that Luther is said to have thrown at the devil.

I saw a widow's mite and the feather of a little bird. I saw some swaddling clothes, a hammer and three nails, and a few thorns. I saw a sponge that had once been dipped in vinegar, and a piece of silver. Whilst I was turning over a small drinking cup which had a very honorable place, I whispered to the attendant:

'Have you got a towel and basin among your collection?'  
'No,' he said, 'not here; you see, they are in constant use.'"

Fellow Christians, we are gifted people—God has put His music in every one of us. We have spiritual gifts, and other abilities too, that God wants us to use in service to others.

We may put ourselves down—claiming there's really nothing we can do. But to do that is to deny the Gospel. It's to refuse to

allow God's grace to work in and through our lives. And this robs us of our worth to God's Kingdom—which is too big a price to pay.

Jesus Christ has never called anyone to be his follower to whom He did not give something which could be used in His service. And He's always ready to add to our lives other gifts as well.

But first, we must be willing to use what we have. We must discover abilities that are already ours, and then invest them in serving others...and in serving God.

There's an attitude that's becoming increasingly pervasive in our culture. It's the exact opposite of what we have been talking about...the opposite of what Jesus taught. It can be expressed something like this: "I refuse to serve anybody for free!"

Don't you see this? Don't you hear it and see it demonstrated all around you? It can even get inside the church!

"Nothing for free" is one way we can live our lives. It's a miserable way to live—yet it's the way being chosen by many. Jesus shows us a better way: His way--the way of service.

Jesus is all about truth. He IS the truth—the truth of God that sets us free to experience life in all its fullness. And one of the freedoms Jesus brings to us is the freedom to serve others.

When we believe life is all about us, we don't have this freedom. Our lives are bound—they're captivated by selfishness. But Jesus Christ turns this world's values upside down. In doing so, He sets you and me free... to serve—free to let the music inside us... out.

This is where real life is found. Abundant life is where the music is! We have this on the authority of God's word (Truth!)—meaningful life happens when it ceases being about us, and starts being about others.

So I ask you today: have you let Jesus Christ set you free? If not, will you come to Him and confess your need of Him—right now? Choose His way of Truth over the world's deceptions, His way everlasting over the world's dead end street.

Follow Christ—serve Him by serving others--and let the world hear that music, and be blessed by the music--that's in you!