

## 2022 09 11 – Gratitude through Music

**Scripture: Exodus 15:20-21**  
**Psalm 100**  
**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** (The Inclusive Bible)

Earlier this week I was listening to CBC radio and the DJ announced that the next song to be played had been requested by someone from the James Smith Cree Nation. It was being played in memory of one of the people who died so tragically last Sunday. I remember thinking that this person who made the request was working through their grief using music. I expect the playing of the song was an expression of both sorrow and gratitude.

Music has been a part of human life since we were formed on this earth.

Findings from archaeological sites suggest that prehistoric people used carving tools to create musical instruments from wood and bone. Even before that, our prehistoric ancestors would have used their own voices to make harmonious sounds. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prehistoric_music)

Of course, the heartbeat is part of our very being and creates one of the most primal rhythms that we know. This rhythm is often duplicated using a drum. Our First Nations people have used drums for thousands of years. Drums provide the background for songs, and songs are the background for dances. Indigenous people consider many of their songs and dances to be sacred. Drums, singing and dancing are all part of pow-wows, yearly celebrations that take place on reserves all over the North American prairies.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_music\\_of\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_music_of_Canada)

The first mention of music in the Bible is found in Genesis 4:21. There we read that one of the descendants of Adam and Eve was named Jubal and Jubal was the ancestor of all who play the harp and the flute. Music was so important to the Israelites that it was even included as part of the story of Adam & Eve, their creation story.

Music was also included in one of the most epic sagas of the Israelite people, the story of their exodus from Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land. Today's reading from the Book of Exodus is a brief segment of that saga. The Israelites had escaped from Egypt and had come to the edge of a sea. Pharaoh's army was coming close when Moses stretched his hand over the sea and divided it creating a path of dry land between two walls of water. In the verse preceding today's reading, we are told that

Once Pharaoh's horses, chariots and charioteers came into the seabed, YHWH let the water collapse back upon them. But the Israelites walked through the sea on dry land (Exodus 15:19).

In response to their miraculous escape, the prophet Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses, picked up her tambourine and began to dance and sing. Her gratitude and her joy were contagious and all the women began to follow her. They too were playing their tambourines and dancing. They sang and they danced in gratitude and praise to YHWH, their God, their strength and their protector.

We both celebrate and mourn through music. Like our First Nations brothers and sisters and like the Israelites we use music both for healing and for giving thanks.

Music touches us at the core of our beings. A Cree language resource that I found online states: “at its core, singing is the vocalization of emotions, the sounding of the heart.” Through music we are able to express and release emotions that are otherwise difficult to process. <https://onlc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/A-Cree-Language-Resource.pdf>

Plato, an ancient Greek philosopher, who lived a few centuries before the birth of Jesus, put it this way:

Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything.

We use music to express our gratitude and we have many reasons to be grateful for music. As Plato suggests, music is not only a delight, but also a necessity.

Music is a part of building community. Today, for the first time in two and a half years we have a choir without masks and a congregation that is able to sing without restriction. How many of us have been craving this experience, living in hope for this moment? We all know the feeling of connection that comes from singing in large groups. It is a feeling that touches us deep in our souls.

There’s a reason why our Indigenous brothers and sisters sang and danced before going to war. There’s a reason why soldiers in World War I marched to the sound of pipes and drum and sang as they marched. There’s a reason why we sing inspiring hymns as we prepare leave our sanctuary every Sunday. Singing in community is a source of hope and strength and courage.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians suggesting that they “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.” He wasn’t suggesting that we should be grateful for hardship, but rather that in all circumstances we can find reasons to give thanks. Even if it’s just thanks for life itself, for the ability to feel the pain. And when we express that thanks, that gratitude, through music, then the music itself will contribute to our healing and will give us the strength to carry on.

Psalm 100 is one of the most beloved songs of the Bible. It is a song of praise and gratitude. It is a song of joy. We may ask ourselves, “Who are we to sing joyful songs at this time mourning in our province and in our commonwealth?”

But just yesterday, I watched a [video](#) of Ellen DeGeneres interviewing Brené Brown. During the interview Brené said:

The last thing this world needs is for us to withhold love and joy. We need to take action against all the systemic stuff that’s happening in the world right now—there’s no shortage of ways to do that—and we need to lean in to love and joy and connection.

Music is an amazing way to lean in to emotion. So let’s do that right now. Let’s use music to prepare ourselves to take action in the world. Let’s use music to demonstrate our gratitude and to build our love, our joy and our connection.

Please feel free to join the choir with your voice and your instruments, as they lead us in Linnea Good’s version of Psalm 100. Let’s *Make a Joyful Noise All the Earth*.

May it be so. Amen.