Colossians 3:15-17   (NIV)

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The great reformer and occasional hymn writer, Martin Luther, said this about music:

“Music is a fair and lovely gift of God which has often wakened and moved me to the joy of preaching... Next after theology, I give to music the highest place and greatest honor... My heart bubbles up and overflows in response to music, which has so often refreshed me and delivered me from dire plagues”

The power of music!

The importance of music in our lives and in our worship experience!

The Scriptures are full of songs. The Book of Psalms is the original hymnbook of the Church. The Apostle Paul, on more than one occasion quoted hymns in his letters---the most famous of which is in Philippians chapter 2.
Add to this, among others, Colossians 1:15-20, which has the cadence---and metre of a song and it's clear that Paul knew the power and importance of music.

Our lesson from Colossians 3 occurs towards the end of a section where Paul is outlining some rules for Christian living. There is an emphasis on unity, peace and gratitude. One of the ways to express such qualities, Paul says, is through the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

As people in the Early Church raised their voices together, they were able to feel a unity. They were able to experience a peace that comes from music that soothes and comforts. They were able to express gratitude to God as one.

The significance of music for the Church has lost none of its lustre right up to today.

I want to touch briefly on three, of many, important things music does for us when we gather to worship God.

Music offers us an opportunity to praise and thank God.
It offers us an outlet for our gifts.
And, music offers us a tool by which we remember.

First, praising and thanking God.

When we sing, we offer God a gift. Music is a thing of beauty and emotion. It provides a way to express our feelings to God. It provides a way to sing out loud and strong. It unites us as one harmonized voice and reminds us that our focus on worship is not just on ourselves.
As we sing or hear the Choir, we are reminded that the music is not first and foremost for us—it is a gift—our gift to God.

Music in the Church isn’t the same as music on the stage or the nightclub. We aren’t putting on a show for the audience of people gathered. We are putting on a show for God. Our enjoyment of it is an added blessing, much like any time we serve God or others—there is always a benefit we receive in return when we have our focus away from our own needs.

And, thankfully, even though God is perfect, God is also tone deaf so however we sing, on key or not, God delights in our offering.

Secondly, music offers us an outlet for our gifts. Music is a gift we give to God. It’s also a gift God gives to us.

Some people have beautiful voices—true instruments given by the Lord. Some people—like me—are gifted in other ways!

An actor was working with a troupe which went from town to town putting on plays. One of the stagehands hummed, whistled and sang the same tune over and over again—and not very well, at that. It was driving everyone crazy.

Finally the actor went up to the stagehand and asked, “Why, why, why do you have to sing that song again and again?”

The stagehand replied, “Because it haunts me.”

“No wonder”, the actor exclaimed, “you’re murdering it!”

Many, many people here don’t murder the music. Their gifts of singing or playing add so much to every worship service.
Our Choir offers people an outlet for their gift of singing---an outlet that’s special to God and special to the congregation. David and Don bring their musical talents to playing guitars as well as singing. The change of pace is always a wonderful blessing.

And, of course, Mark’s gifts of playing and leading music have been a backbone of our worship experience for many years. How wonderful to have these gifts and how wonderful to share them for God’s praise and for our edification!

The third thing I want to say about music is the incredible way it helps us to remember.

We all have favourite hymns that we hum. We know the words by heart. They’re meaningful because they touch our hearts. A great deal of the reason hymns touch us is the association they have with memories. Memories of worship experiences---weddings, Easter, Christmas, perhaps even funerals. Memories of listening or singing hymns at home, around campfires, in times of trouble, in times of joy.

We warm to the memories.
We also remember the truths that are expressed in our favourite hymns.

Most of us don’t think we know very much theology. Most of us haven’t memorized large tracts of the Bible. But, if we think of the hymns we know by heart, we might be surprised as to how much of God’s truth and God’s Word we have committed to memory.

Old chestnuts like Amazing Grace, Love Divine All Loves Excelling and Silent Night mingle in our memory with Lord of the Dance, Shine Jesus Shine and Here I Am Lord.
Memories are brought back.
Experiences are relived.
God's truth and God's Word feed our needs.

The power and importance of music!

In the thirteen years I have served here, Mark has always been the Music Director. Every week I give Mark the Scripture lessons and a very brief summary of the sermon theme. Every Sunday Mark comes up with the hymns and anthems that so very, very often relate perfectly to theme. The times are far too numerous to count when we've been singing a hymn and I've thought to myself: “Well done, Mark!! That nails the theme and underlines perfectly what I've been preaching.”

Mark's ministry has allowed our music experience to bring out our praise and thanksgiving to God.
His leadership and direction have embraced people's gifts and helped them use those gifts, along with his own, to serve God and this congregation.
His work has ensured that we have many, many, many memories for which we will always be grateful.

Music is a gift.
So is Mark.

We are immensely grateful for both!!

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