

Let's Go Deeper... Wednesday, December 9

***Magnificat* was magnificent.** Sunday's McDaniel Memorial Choral Presentation of Mary's *Magnificat* spoke (or sang) to me on many levels:

Click here to listen to a professional recording by Bill Johnson:
<http://www.backroombluegrassband.com/cc/Magnificat.htm>

In preparation for hearing Dr. Johnie Dean's composition presented by our Chancel Choir, the Midway University Chorale and orchestra, our Sunday School Class studied the lyrics.

<http://centralchristianlex.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/12-6-15-Music.pdf>



The Latin words got our imaginations going:

Magnificat ánima mea Dóminum.
Et exultávit spíritus meus: in Deo salutári meo

My soul magnifies the Lord:
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

We talked about the word *magnificat* and what it means to *magnify* the Lord. We decided it's not that the Almighty needs magnifying. Rather, it's that Mary, having been on the receiving end of God's visitation, couldn't help but to employ her voice to reflect/ amplify/ *magnify* her Savior. One of the pleasures of Sunday for me was singing together. Being one of 500+ voices singing "O Come, All Ye Faithful" magnified by orchestra and choir made *my* soul rejoice.

Speaking of the word soul, we saw in its Latin root (*ánima*) the word *animate*. To have a soul is to be *animated*. Alive. Filled with verve. From my seat in the front row, I delighted in hearing not just the voices of the choir or the sounds emanating from the instruments of the orchestra, but their visage as they were making music together. Their souls were alive. On fire. And my soul in turn was warmed.

The third movement of the piece was titled **Et misericordia**.

Et misericórdia eius in progénies et progénies tíméntibus eum.
And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.

At first glance, we didn't particularly like that the word translated mercy—*miseriórdia*—begins with what looks and sounds like misery. What does mercy

have to do with misery? But then someone pointed out the final syllables: cordia as in cords. To have misery, someone suggested, is to be willingly bound (as with a cord) to another's misery. It is the essence of empathy and compassion. God's mercy is God-in-Christ willingly entering into (and bearing, redeeming, and saving us from) our misery.

I really enjoyed our reflection on a verse of the English carol that was part of the fourth movement. The verse reads:

The wise men who found Him laid rich gifts around Him, and oxen they gave Him their hay, and Jesus in beauty accepted their duty; contented in manger he lay

We noted the gift-giving sung in the first lines. The wise men laid their “rich gifts,” of course, but also “oxen gave Him their hay.” Okay, we give what we're able.

But the next lines caught our attention as being of most importance: “Jesus in beauty accepted their duty.” Jesus *accepted* their gifts. Why, we asked, do we find it easier to give gifts than to gladly (“in beauty”) receive them? Some of us attribute it to our self-sufficient culture. Not to need anything is strength; to be needy is a weakness. Others suggested to receive a gift obligates one to give a gift in return and we don't want to owe anyone anything. Yet, Jesus' example is to accept others' gifts— whether of gold or hay—“in beauty.”

We decided one of the gifts we can give others is to receive their gifts appreciatively. Or, to be willing to ask for help so as to allow others the gift of gifting us with their mercy.

The discussion gave me a whole new perspective on the dynamics of giving and receiving gifts. Needless to say, our “digging deeper” into the musical score in Sunday School before we heard it in worship, enabled us to receive the gift of *Magnificat* much more appreciatively. Michael, Johnie, Choirs, Orchestra: Thank you!

Let's Get Ready **for This Sunday...**

I'll be preaching on the unlikeliest of Christmas angels: John the Baptist. The text will be [Luke 3:7-18](#).