

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor Rolly Estabillo
2 March 2014
Key Verse: Psalms 147:7

“Making Music to Our Maker”

Today, I want to do something different. I was inspired by Brent Vernon, you know, this guy, a singer and composer, who came to do a concert at Franconia Baptist Church two Saturdays ago? Brent sang some of his original compositions, and they were really good. Ask those who attended. So, I’m going to try to imitate that this morning. I’d like to sing some of the songs I’ve written. I’d like to make music to our God on the guitar. This will be a joyful noise.

Now, music is a gift of God. No one invented music but God. Even the notes on a musical staff were there already even before they were discovered by a Benedictine monk centuries ago. Music, just like any other creation of God, can be perverted, it can be abused and misused by man. There are different types of music but the best music, of course, is the one that is offered to God whether it is with lyrics or not.

God has intended for his children to sing songs to him or to make music to him. It’s no accident that the book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible. It’s the book with the most chapters. Quick Quiz. How many? God delights in his people singing their praises to him. In the Book of Revelation, we are told that in heaven, that will be our primary occupation. We’re going to sing songs to God for all eternity.

Now, I’m able to write songs. God has given me a gift but I wouldn’t claim to be in the same league as, for example, Michael W. Smith or Chris Tomlin or Matt Redman or other excellent ones. Far from it. But I try to harness this gift for

God's glory. That's why whatever gift God has given you, be sure to use it. If you don't use it, you lose it. Do you believe that? No, don't believe that. The Bible says that the gifts of God are permanent. Romans 11:29 says, "*for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.*" If that were not so, you could argue the case that the gift of eternal life is revocable. But that's not what the Bible teaches. Yet, you lose something if you don't use the gift. You lose the benefit of giving the glory to God. You rob God of his glory. You also lose the privilege of blessing other people.

This morning I'd like to sing my way through this sermon. With a little help from my friend. But at the same time, I'm gonna share from the Word of God. In fact, I'd like to share a little bit of my life with you through these songs.

In the Bible, whenever God's people experience the power of God, they sing a song to God. Like Miriam, the sister of Moses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and King David, just to name a few. The point is when we make music to God we acknowledge that God is continually at work. We recognize the awesome power of God. We affirm the greatness and majesty and sovereignty of God. So, why should we sing to our God? Look at Psalm 98:1a, "*Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things.*"

So, what I want to stress this morning is that a song that is most glorifying and pleasing and honoring to God is a song about God. Because, it's about God, not about me and you. Amen?

There was a time I thought it was about me. And so when I began to write songs, the focus was on me, on my situation, on my emotions. I remember in college, I had a huge crush on a girl, who is not as beautiful as my wife, and I was inspired to write a song. By the way, I'm going to sing just snippets of these songs, maybe just a verse or two and the chorus. Otherwise, we will be here the whole day. Also, some of the songs are in Tagalog. But there will be a translation on the screen.

AKO'Y UMIIBIG SA 'YO

The girl and I had an MU, which stands for mutual understanding, but it was short-lived. I did something wrong which hurt her and she turned away from me. We never got together again. It wasn't God's will. And I'm glad it wasn't. Because 22 years later, I found God's best. And when we got married 10 years ago, I sang this song as she walked down the aisle.

YOU'RE A BEAUTIFUL LADY

Now, back to my college days, so that girl left and that experience deeply saddened me and I wrote a song about it.

DALANGIN KO

In time I recovered and it made me a little bit wiser and became philosophical about life. Then, one night I had a dream. And in the dream I was singing. The song goes like this.

Kung minsa'y aaraw

Kung minsa'y uulan

Kung minsan ay babagyo naman

Ang buhay ay ganyan

Hindi mo malaman

Kung ano ang yong kahihinatnan

Sorry, no chorus. Because suddenly I woke up.

Well, those were the days. Those were the kind of songs I used to write. Songs that focused on me, on people, on things. Until God did a marvelous thing in my life. And I began to sing a different tune. I started to write songs about God. That marvelous thing is when he saved me from sure death. Spiritual death. You see, one of the marvelous things that God does is this:

I. He Seeks and Saves

Jesus says in Luke 19:10, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

Because I came from a religious family, I didn't think I was lost. I thought going to church, being a good boy, not stealing, becoming an altar boy, praying, etc. were enough to earn me a ticket to heaven. In fact, I had the ambition of becoming a minister and preaching in the pulpit because I thought that would bring me closer to God and get me to heaven. And in the process help my family get to heaven too.

In high school, however, I began to think seriously about life. What would happen to me when I die? Where will I go? Is this life all there is? Those questions prompted me to search for the truth. So, I read magazines printed by various Christian sects and denominations hoping to find answers there. My search brought me to a well-known pseudo-Christian organization. I thought they had the truth. I became one of them when I was 16. When I entered college, I became active in that organization that I would go from house to house trying to witness to people.

After two years of this, I came across a book written by a Christian refuting the teachings of this organization. At first, I was angry at the author and planned on refuting his refutations. But as I continued reading my anger turned to confusion. Somehow, he was making sense. And when the author quoted Philippians 2:10-11, *“that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,”* I found myself crying.

At this point, I felt Jesus wanted to come to my heart and yet I wouldn't let Him in. He was convicting me of my sins and yet I refused to ask for forgiveness. My mind was battling with my heart.

Jesus kept knocking but the door of my heart was still shut. I couldn't open it on my own. In desperation, after asking for forgiveness of my sins, I cried, "God, I couldn't grapple with this thing anymore. Please help me." All of a sudden, I felt waves of peace and joy filling my whole being. All my burdens were lifted away. I was now crying because of gladness in my heart. For the first time in my life, I knew I was born again and that Jesus was my Lord and Savior.

I know that it was God's grace that saved me. It was not because I'm good, or I was better than anybody else. The Bible says, "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*" (Eph. 2:8-9)

This next song is about the grace of God.

BY YOUR GRACE ALONE, I STAND

Now, when God saves you, he just doesn't put you in one corner and say, "Ok, now stay there and wait till I get you to heaven." And he leaves you on your own. No, God stays with you and keeps you and cares for you. Like a doting father, he makes you feel like you're a favorite of his. And you just want to be with him, right?

This next song expresses this feeling of just wanting and desiring God.

TO BE WITH YOU

The problem is, sometimes we trip up. We forget about him. We backslide. We go back to our old ways. That is exactly what happened to me. But I'm glad that he brought me back to himself. Because God is a God who revives and restores.

II. He Revives and Restores

God says in Joel 2:25 (HCSB), "*I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust ate, the young locust, the destroying locust, and the devouring locust— My great army that I sent against you.*"

In this passage, God promises to give you a second chance. If you blew it, that's not the end because God has the power to revive your spirit and restore you to normalcy. He will give you back what you lost.

Now, when I was born again, note that it happened through a book. I wasn't in a church, in an evangelistic rally, no one sat down with me to share the gospel and pray with me. I was at home. In short, no one directed me where I should go or what I should do next. What I did next was what I thought I should. A few days after, I went to see my best friend to tell him about my experience. I was excited and everything and wanted him to get saved as well. Unfortunately, he didn't share my joy and even questioned whether I had found the truth. He knew I was a seeker and failed many times in the past and he offered an advice to think things over.

The enemy used that to confuse my mind. Since I had no Christian mentor, I kept it to myself. My life took a tumble after that. I sank deep into depression. I lost interest in my studies. I lost interest in relationships. I lost interest in my hobbies. I lost interest in life in general. It's a miracle that I even graduated from college. But I was already a nervous wreck. I began to see a psychiatrist and he put me on therapy and tranquilizers. I contemplated on ending it all but I met a friend who helped me go through life. He was a psychiatric nurse and he understood me and became a friend to me. Looking back, I know God sent him to save me from hurting myself.

I recovered slightly and tried to be religious again. This time, however, I turned to eastern religions because I thought the God of the Bible wasn't interested in me. In fact, I blamed him for all my troubles. So I read eastern religious books, practiced yoga, became a vegetarian, tried Hare Krishna and Ananda Marga.

After a few years of being like this, I felt as empty as before. And that's when I started to have panic attacks. I managed, nevertheless, to talk my way into a new job in Australia. I said I was going to start anew in a new land. Unfortunately,

I was already so broken emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually that I failed to live up to my boss' expectations. I was fired after six months and I sank into depression again.

But God is faithful. He gave me a new job. It was a job that God designed especially for me as he tried to draw me back to him. Not long afterwards, I decided to renounce mysticism and the eastern gods and tried to return to the Christian God. I didn't know how. I thought that going back to church was the answer. And so, one bright sunny morning, I went to a small Baptist church in the neighborhood to give God another chance. Inside, I said, "God, if you're real, please manifest yourself to me in this church. I need you now." The service ended without any unusual thing happening and I went home feeling emptier than before. I promised myself that I'd never ever go to a church again. During that week, however, I just couldn't shake off thoughts about God and so the next Saturday, I went to a bookstore and picked up a book entitled "The Cross and the Switchblade" by the late David Wilkerson.

I went home and read it in the kitchen and realized that I cried every time a mention is made of the Holy Spirit's power to change lives.

Afraid that my roommates would find me crying when they got home, I went to my bedroom and continued reading. Then, I came to the part wherein the author said that as a young boy, he prayed for his dying father. God heard his prayer and his father suddenly recovered. At this point, God really took hold of me as I began to cry uncontrollably. Unable to continue reading, I closed the book and tried to stand up. As I did, I suddenly fell down to the floor and I wept and wept. I wanted to stand up but I could not.

"God, what's happening?" I asked Him.

"Because you have rejected my Son Jesus for a long time," God said.

Immediately, I asked God's forgiveness and I knew He had forgiven me but my weeping continued and I still couldn't get up. So, I asked, "Lord, what should I do?"

There was silence and all of a sudden, I heard myself repeating, "Lord, I'll follow you wherever you lead" until my tears subsided. The next day, I found myself sitting in the church pew again. After that experience, I knew the Lord was going to restore my life's calling.

The Bible says in Psalm 34:8 (NIV), "*Taste and see that the LORD is good.*" Like the psalmist, I tasted the Lord and saw that he was good.

I wrote a song after this experience. It's called

COME A LITTLE CLOSER

Now that he revived me, I felt like I was ready to tackle the world. But God said, "Not too fast, Rolly. You've got a long way to go. You've got a lot of trusting to do." And God was right. Of course. I had to learn the art of trusting God.

You see, sometimes we get ahead of God. We set our own agenda, we make our own plans and then pray and ask God to bless our plans and agenda. But that's not the way it should be. We should pray, "Lord, what do you want for my life? What is your agenda for me? What should I do? Where should I go?"

One thing we should understand is that another thing of God's marvelous deeds is

III. He Protects and Provides

Psalm 18:2, "*The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*"

So, that was in Australia. Actually, I like it in Australia. Nice weather, nice surroundings. I would like to settle there. But God had other plans. You know how sometimes you're just beginning to feel comfortable and then suddenly God

interrupts? He throws you off-balance? He started to talk to me about going to Hawaii. I should have said “yes” immediately. But I hesitated. You know why? Because that means leaving my comfort zone. I had a lot of friends already in Australia and I was involved in ministry in our church and I was earning good money. Besides, I was still having those panic attacks. Just thinking of being away to be in an unfamiliar place, makes me tense all over. But God was gently saying, “I will heal you.”

So, what’s the deal with Hawaii? God wanted me to attend a discipleship training school under YWAM or Youth With A Mission. Their headquarters is in the big island of Kona. The joke is that YWAM also stands for Youth Without Any Money. And that was true with me. It would cost thousands to study there. My friends couldn’t understand why I was leaving when there were other good missionary schools in Australia. I wish I wouldn’t leave but there was no doubt in my mind that God wanted me there.

So, I sold my computer, my guitar, my stereo and other stuff to buy my plane ticket. A couple of weeks before I was to leave which was on January 1, 1992, however, I still lack money for my tuition which was about \$24 00. I began to feel nervous but every time God would give me his peace. One time, I was having my devotions and the verse from Psalm 46:10 jumped at me “Be still and know that I am God”. Then on Christmas day a friend of mine showed me a calendar he got as a gift and the verse on the calendar says, “Be still and know that I am God”. Then, on December 28, a friend and I went to visit an old lady in church who invited us for dinner and while she was preparing food I happened to see a folded paper on top of her refrigerator and there was a verse on it that says, “Be still and know that I am God”. Hmm, God seems to be speaking to me. But on the eve of my departure, December 31, I still didn’t have the money for tuition. I was so discouraged that I told myself that when the plane arrives in Hawaii for

stop-over, I wouldn't get off the plane and go straight to LA where my parents were.

Then, at the stroke of midnight, my phone rang. It was a good Christian friend calling from the Philippines. She knew about my plans and she and other friends of mine had encouraged me all along. She asked if there was any problem. I told her about the money. And she said, "How come you didn't tell me earlier. Tomorrow I'll ask Nanette (another friend of ours) to wire the money to the school." So, God came through just in time.

Now, let me say this. Just because God opened the way for you doesn't mean that everything will be smooth-sailing. Life is full of ups and downs, twists and turns. There will always be tests, trials, and temptations. You may want to give up. But God will never leave you nor forsake you. He will provide and he will protect.

So, I wrote this song based on Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God."

BE STILL

After I finished my training in Hawaii, God directed me to go back to work as a computer programmer in New Jersey. And there I got involved in a church and became a worship leader. I began to write a few more songs but then I realized afterwards that all my songs were kind of slow in tempo. I tried to write a more upbeat one but the inspiration wasn't there. So, I prayed, "Lord, please give me a new song. Give me a song that will make people feel happy, and clap, and dance. Not just make them cry or sad."

Then, one day, as I was driving, a tune came to my head. I rehearsed it over and over in my mind and by the time I arrived home, a new song came to me.

COME, LET US WORSHIP AND REJOICE