

The Unheard Sound

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/the-unheard-sound/>

... again there shall be heard in this place ... the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride ...

Jeremiah 33: 10, 11

God is restoring the *voice of the bride* in this generation. The voice of praise and worship—the voice of a passionate and pure love is being heard again across the nations. But as thrilling as this is it's important to understand that in God's biology the mouth is always connected to the heart (see Mtt 12:34; Rom 10:10). It inevitably speaks from the abundance of what is within.

The unheard sound of a pure heart

So, in worship the thing that brings pleasure to the heart of God is not so much the physical sound of our voice or instruments – as important as that is – but the sound that resonates with his own nature—that emanates from a pure heart. A sound not heard by the natural ear. This is why, when we touch the heights of worship, it is so revelatory—*"the pure in heart shall see God"* (Mtt 5:8). The thing, therefore, that either reveals or obscures God in our times of worship is not the music, but the condition of our hearts! True worship is the unheard sound of a pure heart.

Worship then, is not just a matter of human expertise, musical skill, or creativity. Nor is it a matter of musical style or preference. This is why Jesus said that, *"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth"* (Jn 4:24). And is why the Lord cried out through Amos, *"Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps"* (Amos 5:23). Israel, while maintaining the outward performance of worship, had lost its inner reality: *"These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me"* (Isa, 29:13 NASB).

God—the ultimate music-maker

So, what is the answer? It is certainly not getting rid of music or musical instruments. That's been tried by previous generations, and to their loss. Nor is it getting rid of certain styles of music. We thank God for musically gifted people, and for the powerful creativity and diversity that flows from the One who is the ultimate music-maker. Man made in the image of God cannot help but create. Music and the arts, by their very nature, reveal God's glory to the world.

The heart of a lover

The answer, therefore, is found in our heart-relationship with the 'Great-Heart' himself. The heart of God is revealed to us throughout Scripture as the white-hot heart of a passionate lover. This is why when Jesus was asked to reduce all the revelation of God to one commandment it was to, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"* (Mk 12:29, 30). It is why he relates to us as his bride. And so, he says through Jeremiah, grieving over Israel's backslidings, *"I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown"* (Jer 2:2).

Worship is how we are intimate with God. And to the degree our worship, whether in song, on instruments, or even in silence, issues from a pure heart of passion for God to that degree it will ascend as a sweet smelling aroma to him: *"But thanks be to God, who ... manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him ... "* (2 Cor 2:14 NASB).

Spiritual adultery

God is interested in our singleness of heart toward him. Israel pursued other lovers – the gods of the nations – committing spiritual adultery with idols. James teaches that for the believer *"friendship with the world"* is spiritual adultery: *"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"* (Jas 4:4 NASB). Now many of us have thought 'the world' in the church is rock music, belly rings, and shaved heads! Seriously now, do you think that Satan, the master strategist, gives two hoots for our music preferences, or where we wear our jewellery? If he has distracted your heart from its pure devotion to Christ he has succeeded. Whether you listen to Mozart or MTV, wear a business suit or ripped jeans, the issue is your heart.

The wisdom-writer is right when he exhorts us to, "*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*" (Prov 4:23). In fact, 'the world' in the church is much more likely to manifest itself in its measurements of success and its self-seeking spirit as we "*compare ourselves among ourselves*" (2 Cor 10:12); or through gauging someone else's spirituality by their outward appearance.

The fact is, if the Lord has our hearts and minds he will have our obedience in every other aspect. This is why Satan's strategy is to draw the concentration of our inner affections away from the Lord:

2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:2–3 ESV

Satan is perfectly happy for our hearts to be distracted by the *work of God* if it means we are distracted from the *God of the work*.

And it is why Peter's exhortation reaches to the entire bride of Christ:

3 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear— 4 but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

1 Peter 3:3–4 ESV

The bride—all glorious within

So, the mark of the bride is not found in anything external, in what might be considered glamorous, or even 'religious'. But it is the inner beauty of the heart. Speaking of the bride, the Psalmist declares that she is "*all glorious within*" (Ps 45:13). This is the "glorious church" of Ephesians chapter 5 (v 27) without blemish and holy. Holiness therefore has nothing to do with religious appearances or activity, but everything to do with the indwelling presence of a holy God. She radiates the beauty of a heart filled with his glory.

The alabaster box

So what does this look like, and how does it work? According to Peter this beauty is manifested through a "*gentle and quiet spirit*". This in my estimation is the most costly and yet the most crucial quality of the inner life. Peter says that in God's sight it is "*precious*", or a "*great price*".

This is the same Greek word used to describe the "*very expensive*" perfume that Mary of Bethany, in an act of pure worship, poured over Jesus (see Jn 12:1-8; also Mk 14:1-11). But to do this she had to first break the alabaster box (see Mark 14:5). This symbolises the breaking of the outer man to enable the pouring forth of worship. Without this breaking there will be no release of the Spirit—no outpouring of the inner life in abandonment to God. In one momentary extravagant act of devotion it had cost, in monetary terms, an entire year's wages provoking the censure of some (including Judas), claiming that it should have been sold for the poor. Those who refuse to allow the breaking of their hearts and of their natural thinking only ever see an act of foolishness. Jesus, however, endorsed this seeming extravagance as true worship. It was effectively a prophetic preparation for what was to come—for the cross and ultimately the crown.

The 'quieting of the soul'

Here is the lesson: David, who was used of God to restore true worship, was first led in unusual and perplexing ways to break the strength of the natural man. Through these experiences he could say,

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and

too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Psalm 131:1–2 ESV

The *'quieting of the soul'* in the face of perplexing circumstances is difficult. When our mind and heart cry out—*"This is crazy — it just doesn't make sense any more!"*; *"God has forgotten me!"*; *"He's not really in control of my life after all — its all up to me now!"*; or *"This is impossible — it can't be done!"* — it is the time to subdue our soul by waiting on the Lord. As we do our whole being learns to yield to him and to his ways in our life. Our anxiety and striving dissipate as we take time to behold him and to be filled with his peace: *"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You"* (Isa 26:3). The Hebrew for having our mind *"stayed on the Lord"* means 'to lean upon, lay, rest, support, uphold'. When we posture our hearts in worship and waiting on the Lord we are *'weaned'* from our own strength—we are trusting him for our lives:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths (Prov 3:5-6 NASB).

In worship we lay down our own understanding and trust him. This creates within us what Peter describes as, *"the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit"*—it is the inner beauty of a bride yielded to the one she loves. It is significant that the New Testament Greek word for worship is *proskuneo* which means 'to make obeisance, do reverence to', or more literally, 'to kiss towards'. Worship then is the surrender of our spirit to being romanced by the Bridegroom.

New frontiers of the spirit

The Bridegroom is calling the bride to new frontiers of the Spirit. The old boundaries and frameworks within her are being dismantled. He is depositing a heavenly seed deep within her that will bring forth new facets of Christ's image. She hasn't been this way before. The old ways and ministrations of the Spirit were adequate for the last season, but they will not bring her into the next. He is calling her up to new heights of worship, of revelation, and glory. There is right now an open door in the heavens for her. It will bring her into the fullness of Christ and the complete manifestation of the Father's glory. This is the woman of Revelation 12 clothed in the sun (the Father's glory), standing on the moon (the finished work of Christ), and crowned with twelve stars (the fullness of the Spirit and apostolic power). She is crying out in childbirth for the full manifestation of Christ and his kingdom in the nations.

There is a realignment in the spirit occurring. The stage of history is being set—nations are being aligned according to the Father's predetermined plan to have a bride for his Son: *"And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church"* (Eph 1:22 NASB). He will gather her from all nations, tribes, and peoples, so that, *"He will say to those who were not his people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'"* (Hos 2:23b). Speaking of today the Bridegroom prophesied,

16 And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' 19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

Hosea 2:16, 19–20 ESV

This is the time like never before to let go—it is the time for spiritual extravagance. Perhaps your *alabaster box* is the measure of grace you carried for this last season—for a day that is passing. A new day in the Spirit has arrived. But if we hold on to the ministration of the Spirit for the last season we will discover it has worms and that it smells (see Ex 16:20). It was fresh and fitting for then, but will not sustain us for a new day.

It is time for change. There is a fresh wind of the Spirit coming and it will encode our spirits with the *new thing* that God is about to do. It is time for the *alabaster box* of the last anointing to be surrendered. James says that the Spirit within us longs

jealously for us (see Jas 4:5). God is a jealous lover and, therefore, he "*opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble*" (Jas 4:6). This is the season to humble ourselves and submit to the *Father of spirits*. Under his hand your inner life is being reshaped for you to share in his holiness. It is time to let go of the old to be part of the new—the worshipping bride that has made herself ready (see Jas 4:7-10; Heb 12:9-11; Rev 19:7-8).

The voice of the Bridegroom is calling, "*My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside... let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet...*" (S of S 2:14). He wants to hear your voice – the voice of the bride – the unheard sound of a pure heart.

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