

### **374 “In accord with the Lord”**

In our recent Weekly Reflections we have focussed on the need for great care in our worship, and particularly over our “music, singing and dancing”, for such activities are deep and can lead us on to wrong paths if not kept properly in accord with the Lord and His Word.

Christians gather for worship in a range of different denominations, styles and locations, including cathedrals, churches, chapels, school halls, former cinemas, private homes and outdoors (not advisable in a British February ...). The outward expressions of worship, including the music, vary greatly from occasion to occasion of course, but we are given in God’s Word some central principles on which all else should be based.

These principles spring from the nature of the Church itself – what it is, who it is, and what it is for. When the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God our Father formed “the Church”, a wholly new group of Jews and Gentiles brought together by their shared faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. This “Church” is described by the Holy Spirit through Paul as “a mystery”, that is, something previously concealed (there being no hint of “the Church” in the Old Testament), and which had only now been suddenly revealed (eg., Ephesians 1.9-10; 3.3,4,9-12).

This mixing of the previously “unmixable”, (for Jew and Gentile had long held each other in mutual contempt), was a severe shock to all involved! But God in His wisdom, truly “the God of surprises”, entrusted these “chalk-and-cheese” people, now comprising “the body of Christ”, with the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Christian Gospel.

That still holds good for today. Any local Christian fellowship still consists, in a milder way, of “chalk-and-cheese people! – a mix of individuals of different ages, backgrounds, characters and gifts. These have been drawn together by their common faith in Jesus as Lord, and share the divinely-appointed task of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We know from many scriptural passages, in the Epistles in particular, that the “getting-along together” of this disparate group of people is a key part, and a key demonstration to others, of what the Church should be about, but it is neither easy nor automatic.

These fellow disciples of Jesus Christ need to have been “born again”(John 3.3-8), being now “new creations” (II Corinthians 5.14-19), worshipping God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4.24), walking “not after the flesh but after the Spirit” (Romans 8.1b), and in the light of Jesus’ particular prayer, all being “one” (John 17.20-23). We note that such people possess all these blessings through no merit or achievement of their own, but purely by the loving grace of God (eg., Ephesians 2.4-10).

Now none of us is yet “the finished article”, and the Holy Spirit’s work of sanctification is an ongoing process within each of us. Our learning what “all being one” is to mean in practice thus requires from all concerned a healthy dose of “the fruits of the Spirit” (Galatians 5.22-23), wholesome priorities (Philippians 4.8-9), solid love (I Corinthians 13.4-8a), and a shared “seeking first of the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6.33).

The framework in which this local expression of the Church is to operate is thus one of complete dependence on God, gratitude for His mercies, Spirit-enlightened worship, love for one another, and a loving holding-forth, in word and deed, of the Word of life to all those who remain outside the gift of salvation by faith in Christ. It is a framework that emphasises servanthood and service, rather than competition and status.

This is the context in which the music-life of any Christian community is set. Let those responsible for the music – the choosing, playing, singing and leading – be first and foremost spiritually mature, that their musical gifts can remain rightly channelled. Let the content of the lyrics to be sung be wholly scriptural, with careful checking of this beforehand in both older and newer hymns and songs. Let the instruments and tunes to be used be appropriate for the Lord, for His people and for the occasion. Let those leading the worship, by voices and instruments, be discreetly positioned to one side, humbly offering their gifts, among the other spiritual gifts present, for the edifying of all and for the glory of God rather than of anyone else. Let the musicians remain under the authority of those holding overall leadership at the occasion, that all may indeed be done “decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14.40).

It is in simple ways such as these that our music can fulfil its special role in our worshipping Almighty God “in spirit and in truth”. What is more in such occasions, thanks be to God, no subtle, lurking, idolatrous “golden calf” will ever gain an entrance.

© 2020 Faithful Sheep Ministries – [www.fsmins.org](http://www.fsmins.org)