

St. David's Presbyterian Church
St. John's, NL
"Ringtones of the Resurrection"
Dr. J. Dent

April 24, 2011
Easter Day

You know today is about Jesus conquering death by suffering the cross and truly dying, then truly being raised to life, giving us a way to have life that begins now and then continues on beyond our physical deaths. Easter is about life, how God has tried to get through to us in Jesus Christ.

So now the question is: "How can God get through to you and me?" One of the quick answers is "Through music." I don't mean Easter music, although there is a lot of good Easter music, some of which we are singing and playing today.

I mean music in general. Music speaks to us in a different way than a lecture or a sermon or a novel or a newspaper. I believe it speaks more to the whole person, at levels we may not even be aware of as we listen. Music has done so since the beginning of civilization, at least since Jubal was mentioned in Genesis 4 as one of Cain's ancestors who played the harp and the flute.

And we know the trumpet was played in ancient Egypt as Pharaoh Tutankhamun "King Tut" was buried with a trumpet, and it was recently looted from the Museum of Antiquities in Cairo. They played a recording that was made in 1938 on CBC this week, of this trumpet which is more than 3300 years old, and fairly delicate as any metal that old might be. It sounded something like this:

So we know music has been speaking to people for millennia. We read the Psalms every week and we know these were David's worship songs. And today we have many varieties of music that we offer to God and which speaks to us. I hope we know how much music speaks to us, and how much God can use music, many, many kinds...

Let me give you some examples. The first is a German man from 300 years ago: J S Bach has given us a little taste of heaven in his instrumental and other work: for instance, the Air from the Overture #3 in D Major...
(computer)

This differs quite a bit from the style my mother and father grew up with in the 1940s, something some of you will remember when it first came out... play Glenn Miller "In the Mood" Mom said when this music was new, it was so captivating, that people wouldn't dance, they would just stare in amazement at the "big" sound. Probably this was one reason she encouraged me to take up the sax... And we still like many kinds of jazz and swing... For instance in the last ten years or so...Ingrid and the Swing Katz... on the book of Daniel and Haman...

Now I was born in the 50s and really didn't listen to much music like all my friends, but as a teenager when my friends from my music classes explained that being a Christian was more than a Sunday decision, it was life decision, a life-style decision, a 24-7 relational commitment to Jesus, and I saw in them something I liked and loved. So I made a public profession of Christ, gave my life to him at a Presbyterian Church in N. California. There were 3000 members in that church at the time, and 450 or so in the High School group where a number of my friends went. And I began to hear a lot of music. A radical new idea of bringing guitars into the church was happening then, people were singing a new style of music, a new thing called an overhead projector was being used and a new kind of worship began to be front and centre in the teen group and be on the edges of the worship service which was still mostly hymns in those days. I couldn't find original recordings but some of Canadian Presbyterian Glen Soderholm's recent music is reminiscent of what I remember from those days, countryish, higher energy like "Hallowed be your name" from his 2006 album *World Without End...*

And I would listen to Randy Stonehill and Larry Norman who were long haired rock and rollers. I did find Larry Norman's 1976 album "In Another Land" on Itunes. This is what I'd listen to in the car in those days...

The music, the humour, the truth touched me in ways I can hardly express. And while I still loved Bach and choruses such as the Gaithers' "Because He Lives," I was becoming more and more aware of how many styles and how many voices God was using to get through to me, and to those around me.

I'll skip the 80s and move on into the 90s and early 2000s where "worship music" was becoming a huge part of my life, not diminishing other music but reminding me how God's creative voice was continuing to sound out from his people to all who would listen.

From Ireland, Robin Mark...

From Sweden, Ultrabeat (not the new one on 99.1) ...

From Uganda, Watoto Children's Choir...

From the monastery...John Michael Talbot and Michael Card

From the streets...Toby Mac...Boomin then Funky Jesus Music 2010

And back to Bach to cleanse the palate, a bit, I had some better rap but we'll keep it for next time...

Happy Easter...Remember to let God's message through, in musical form, in Scripture, in your prayers.

Let us pray.