

## “Whose Beat Are You Marching To?”

Galatians 5:16-18

8/15/10

We hear God’s Word this morning: Live by the Spirit...If you are led by the Spirit...Later on we hear to be guided by the Spirit.

In the beginning the Spirit of God swept over the waters—creating life, order, balance, rhythm.

There is a rhythm to life. This is not some new age, “talk to the rocks” kind of thing. This is how God created the world. From the beginning, as we heard from Genesis 1 this morning, God separated the light from the darkness—there was evening and there was morning.

Rhythm.

God made the solar system flowing in its cyclic rhythm.

God made the balance of life on this earth.

God created for six days and rested on the seventh—rhythm.

God made us, humans, in His image, within the same rhythm of His Spirit and within the rhythm of creation, existing with all living things.

**Whether we are aware or not, there is The Rhythm of Life.**

And from our beginnings as God’s people we have joined in that as we worship. In 2 Chronicles 5, as king Solomon brings the Ark of the Covenant into the newly built temple, the priests and the levitical singers are gathered, and in verse 12 says:

*“With cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the alter with one hundred twenty priests who were trumpeters. It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord, ‘For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.’”*

In unison in praise and thanksgiving. Rhythm.

**[Play YouTube video: “Two Djembe Players,”]**

We know the African rhythms, for many the drums a central part of their life. It is said that the drum is representative of your mother’s heartbeat in the womb.

I have been to worship with our Old German Baptist Brethren brothers and sisters. They have no instruments, but I can tell you for sure, there is rhythm in the rise and fall and chorals of their hymn singing. Beautiful.

Chris plays the organ for us this morning. She plays to a tempo, a rhythm, that we sing along with.

We have our new set of drums. In my words, they just give a voice to the underlying rhythm so that it is clearly heard.

There is an underlying rhythm, beat if you will, that we are either in step with or not. And now, as Jesus has opened up new life for us and given us the Holy Spirit, we are called to be led by Him, in step with Him with our lives.

Are we in rhythm with the Holy Spirit? Are you with your life? How do we know?

The reasons are many why we get out of rhythm: schedules, stress, laziness, unexpected events, hurts, whatever. You name it. The important thing is to recognize when we are out of rhythm with the Spirit.

So how do we know if we are? What happens when we are out of rhythm?

Maybe you don't feel right. You notice that things bother you more. You're irritable. Nothing seems to be clicking. Maybe you're withdrawing from people more. You're not feeling much joy or peace in your life. Signs of being out of rhythm.

I can certainly speak as a drummer on this one. When I am playing with a band, grooving along making great music together, if I miss a beat and get off rhythm it turns into a mess. If I am diligent and alert, I can get back in without too much disruption, but it is still quite obvious to everyone that I missed something.

If I am simply off that day, and not listening to everyone else and the true rhythm of the music, then it will throw everyone else off. When I march to my own beat, it ruins the whole performance.

**When I am out of step with the Spirit and march to my own beat, it ruins the whole performance.**

God's Word is pretty clear here in Galatians 4:19, this from The Message paraphrase: *"It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap-sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on."*

Ouch. The truth is that when we are out of synch with God, we are out of synch with life. Maybe you aren't at the extreme of these traits Paul describes here, but as soon as we begin to get out of step with the Spirit the beginnings of self-serving behavior take shape. If we are honest here this morning, we all know it's true.

I mean, look at this list.

Remind you of our world today?

S.D. Gordon says it very well in *Christianity Today*: "When the heart's wrong, there can't be peace. Selfishness is a gangrene, eating at the very vitals. Sin is a cancer, poisoning the blood. Peace is the rhythm of our wills with Jesus' love-will. Disobedience breaks the music. Failure to keep in touch makes discord. The notes jar and grate. We have broken off. The peace can't get in. Jesus made peace by his blood. We get it only by keeping in full touch with him." *S.D. Gordon in The Bent-Knee Time. Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 4.*

Chris, please play some discord on the organ.

**Failure to keep in touch, to keep in rhythm with the Spirit makes discord.**

Now, Chris, how about some sweet sounding chords. All the right notes in harmony together.

That's why Paul is so clearly encouraging the Galatians in what they have in Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit. We don't have to be involved in that. We as the church must not be. When we start bringing these works of the flesh into the life of the church, it's a cancer that must be healed. I don't mean that we are perfect here in this place. Please don't hear that, especially if you are a guest with us this morning. If you haven't noticed already, we are human beings here, who bring all our brokenness and pain and sin with us. That is why we are here, because God made us His children and His church by His grace. Not because we are good, but because He is good.

So no, this is not about acting like we are some perfect group of people. This goes deeper into each of our souls, to say that we are here to do just that—offer our souls to God for that healing and wholeness only He can give.

We get it only by keeping in full touch with Him. And that comes by opening our hearts to Him.

The movie *Ray* is about the trials, challenges, successes, and addictions of the late pianist, singer, and composer Ray Charles. The film shows how Ray compensated for his blindness by learning to hear what others couldn't.

As a blind 10-year-old, Ray enters his home and accidentally trips on the side of a rocking chair. He falls, yells out in pain, and calls out to his mother for help. His mother steps forward, stops, hesitates, and takes a step back. Ray, lying on a rug on the floor, continues to cry for his mother's help.

His mother silently goes back to her work. Ray hears men chattering and a hen clucking. He stops crying, looks around him, and slowly gets up. He hears more people talking, a cow mooing, and metal clanking. He looks into the direction of a kettle of boiling water.

Stretching out his arms, he walks toward a crackling fireplace and feels its heat, pulling back a hand because it is too close. His mother continues to look on, concerned with his every move. Ray listens intently as a horse and carriage go by.

He then hears a cheeping grasshopper close by and walks toward it. He bends down and, fumbling a bit, encloses his hand on the grasshopper. Smiling, he picks it up and puts it to his ear. His mother is taken aback and gives a low gasp.

Ray says, "I hear you, Mama. You're right there."

His mother now has tears streaming down her face. She tells him, "Yes, yes, I am." She kneels in front of him and gives him a hug.

Elapsed Time: 01:09:27 to 01:12:02 (DVD scene 13)

Content: Rated PG-13 for depictions of drug addiction and sexuality

*Ray* (Anvil Films and Bristol Bay Productions, 2004); directed by Taylor Hackford, written by James L. White and Taylor Hackford; submitted by Jerry De Luca, Montreal West, Quebec, Canada

**We must stop, close our earthly eyes, and open the eyes of our spirit.**

Then we will see. Then we realize that our loving Creator God is right here. Then we are aware of what the Spirit is doing, in rhythm with His power all around and within us.

Proverbs 3:5-6: *"Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."*

How do we do that?

**Engage in God's Word daily.**

*"God's Word is living and active,"* Hebrews 4:12 tells us, *"sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit."*

If I get out of rhythm as a drummer, I must quickly listen to the music to pull me back in step. Allow God's Word to pull you back in step with Him. This [The Bible] is living and active.

**Pray daily—time spent sharing with and listening to God.**

Romans 8:26-27: *"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows that is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."*

Wendy Wright, in *Christianity Today* says, "Prayer is the plumb line that finds its rest in the place where our hearts beat in rhythm with the heart of God. Scripture is the weight that propels the plumb line's fall."

Wendy M. Wright in *Weavings* (July/Aug. 1996). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 40, no. 12.

**Worship God together.**

Ephesians 5:18b-19: *“Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in all your hearts.”*

We are here to respond to God’s love, making melody to the Lord in our hearts.

**To live in step with the Spirit is to be the music of God’s love within the world.**

Different. Holy. Giving hope that there is much more to life than these things, never resigning ourselves to living into any lesser calling.

Of course, when we are in rhythm with the Spirit, God’s Word makes clear what happens: *“He brings gifts into our lives, much the way fruit appears in an orchard,”* again from The Message: *“Things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal communities, not needing to force our own way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.”*

Whose beat are you marching to? Amen.