



February 1

Growing up in a Lutheran college town had its perks. The Waldorf Choir would sing in worship at my home congregation a few times each year. I would sit in awe as these voices blended perfectly and you could hear the sound reverberating throughout the entire sanctuary. I have had similar experiences witnessing the beauty of other Lutheran college choirs, Luther, St. Olaf, Wartburg, Concordia, and the National Lutheran Choir. There is something about the sound that really speaks to the heart. It is beautiful.

These experiences highlight how we often approach worship. We may not think about it this way, but most Lutheran congregations have a similar approach to worship. We like it to be clean without a lot of surprises. It is often restrained. It is predictable. Sometimes, it even crosses into being too repetitive. We come in with expectations which range from what types of hymns we sing to “will MY seat be open?” We like things to be clean and consistent.

We also strive for beauty. I am not talking whether or not your lashes and makeup are “on point.” I am talking about the flow of the service. As Lutherans, it is really easy to get distracted if things start to go in a different direction. If there is a long pause while waiting for someone to walk through the sanctuary, people start looking around. We expect the music to be rehearsed. When there are mistakes, it can cause discomfort. We approach worship as an offering. It is something that we “do,” and want to do it well.

This Micah text paints a very different picture. It speaks of God being disinterested in such things. These offerings listed are beyond extravagant. “Thousands of rams, tens thousands of rivers of oil...” is clearly hyperbole. The heart of the message is simple, God is not interested in how perfectly we are able to worship. The way we worship God is not through beauty in worship, it is in the changing of hearts.

I spoke earlier of the various beautiful and glorious choirs I have heard sing in worship. They were beautiful. There is one choir, in all my experiences, that stands above all the others. I could not stop crying listening to them sing in worship. It was the most beautiful sound I had ever heard, and it forever changed the way that I think of worship and music. The choir was the Teen Challenge Choir. It consisted of around 30 adults who had overcome the bonds of addiction.

To my trained ear, they had 30 singers in probably 25 different keys. It did not matter. They sang from the heart, with a passion that the trained voice could never mimic. There was no desire to be a beautiful sound. It was the voice of a people who were forever changed and grateful for all that God had done. My heart was full. I wept. For maybe the first time in my life, it felt like I saw through God-centered eyes.

I am not saying that we need to drastically change worship, limit planning, and see where the Spirit takes us. It is good to approach God with a thoughtful offering. That is good. I do believe that we are called to hold that in tension with how we live out our love of God. The way we show love to God is by showing we have listened to what God asks of us. Are we standing up for justice? Do we love and live out kindness? Are we walking humbly?

In short, how do we show God our heart? There are ways we can live that as a community. We continue the work of feeding the hungry through support of our free pantry, DMARC, and other groups. We engage in advocacy. Lutheran Day on the Hill is approaching, which is a great opportunity. We strive to be a safe place for all people to explore faith and gather in worship. I thank God for this community of faith and the ways that we show our heart to the world.

“With what shall I come before the Lord?” How do you show your heart? I cannot answer that for you. The only one who can answer that is you. Amen

Pastor Michael Schmidt