

2.28.10 EGCC Middle School Class

Theme: God as Song

WATCH Nooma Video: Rhythm

ASK

- Do you listen to music?
- Why?
- Is there some music that you like more than other music?
- Why?
- In a previous class (last week), we talked some about the characteristics of God. In this Nooma, Bell says that when he thinks about God, he hears a song.
- What do you think about that?
- Do *you* hear a song when you think about God?
- Let's suppose you did...what kind of song do you hear?

TELL

- Rob Bell says that we can't help but sing. He also says though that some of us are out of tune.
- Let's look at a story where there seems to be two different songs being sung.
- This is a story about the apostle Paul (apostle means: sent out). He appeared on the scene pretty soon after Jesus was crucified.
- Whereas the 12 disciples stayed mostly in Israel, Paul went throughout the Roman Empire to spread the story of Jesus and the Good News that Jesus taught and represented.
- This story does not happen in Israel.

READ Acts 16:16-34 (*The Message edited for clarity and length*)

16 One day, Paul and Silas in Phillipi, Macedonia, on their way to the place of prayer, a slave girl ran into them. She was a psychic and, with her fortunetelling, made a lot of money for the people who owned her. 17 She started following Paul around, calling everyone's attention to him by yelling out, "These men are working for the Most High God. They're laying out the road of salvation for you!" 18 She did this for a number of days until Paul, finally annoyed with her, turned and commanded the spirit that possessed her, "Out! In the name of Jesus Christ, get out of her!" And it was gone, just like that.

19 When her owners saw that their lucrative little business was suddenly bankrupt, they went after Paul and Silas, roughed them up and dragged them into the market square. Then the police arrested Paul and Silas 20 and pulled them into a court with the accusation, "These men are disturbing the peace - dangerous Jewish agitators 21 subverting our Roman law and order." 22 By this time the crowd had turned into a restless mob out for blood. 23 After beating them black and blue, they threw them into jail, telling the jailkeeper to put them under heavy guard so there would be no chance of escape. 24 He did just that - threw them into the maximum security cell in the jail and clamped leg irons on them.

25 Along about midnight, Paul and Silas were at prayer and singing a robust hymn to God. The other prisoners couldn't believe their ears. 26 Then, without warning, a huge earthquake! The jailhouse tottered, every door flew open and all the prisoners were loose. 27 Startled from sleep, the jailer saw all the doors swinging loose on their hinges. Assuming that all the prisoners had escaped, he pulled out his sword and was about to do himself in, figuring he was as good as dead anyway, 28 when Paul stopped him: "Don't do that! We're all still here! Nobody has run away!"

29 The jailer got a torch and ran inside. Badly shaken, he collapsed in front of Paul and Silas. 30 He led them out of the jail and asked, "Sirs, what do I have to do to be saved, to really live?" 31 They said, "Put your entire trust in the Master Jesus. Then you'll live as you were meant to live - and everyone in your house included!" 33 The jailer took them to his home. He dressed their wounds and had food set out for a festive meal. 34 It was a night to remember.

ASK

- How were Paul and Silas treated through the first half of the story?
- Thinking about Rob Bell saying that we're *all* singing a song, but some of us are singing out of tune, what song would you say the owners were singing (verses 19-21)? (examples/hints: singing to the tune of money, singing to the tune of revenge, singing to the tune of "show these guys a lesson with violence," singing to the tune of "let's lie about what actually happened and get other people scared and involved too," etc.)
- So with all that's happened to them, what song are Paul and Silas singing in verse 25? (prayer, hymns).
- Does this surprise you?
- Have you ever been singing next to someone who can't sing but is singing loudly?
- It's hard, isn't it, to keep singing in tune, and to keep singing the song the way it's supposed to be sung...?
- That's what seems so surprising about Paul and Silas here.
- Don't you think they should be singing out of tune by now?
- Don't you expect them to be singing a song more like, "This isn't fair!" or "I feel so sorry for myself" or "I hate these stupid Romans" or "Prison food is the worst, isn't it?"
- But because they keep singing in tune, what happens after the earthquake? (they don't leave)
- If you were in prison after having been beaten, wouldn't you try to escape if the opportunity provided itself?
- But because they stayed, then what happened? (they stopped the jailer from killing himself; and they were witnesses to a different way of life, they showed the jailer a different song that could be sung).
- What is the jailer's response to this tune that Paul and Silas are singing? (he takes them home and bandages them and prepares a festive meal for them).

TELL

- Rob Bell says, "When I think of God, I hear a song...And so, Jesus came to show us how to live in tune with the song. How Jesus is, is how God is like."
- Paul, like Jesus, lived in tune with the song, and because he stayed in tune, even when it would've been easy to get out-of-tune, he shared the song.

- The same can be true for us.
- As we continue to learn and see how Jesus lived, then we more and more learn how to keep singing the song of God, no matter what's happening to us.
- And when we do that, then those who are around us will hear and be reminded of the song we're made to be singing.
- A good song is catchy.
- And maybe, like with the jailer, some of the people will say, "I'm going to sing that song now because it's a much better song."
- That's the Good News for today.

IF there's time...

ACTIVITY - Musical chairs. Feel free to point out that this activity illustrates how when the music stops, things get violent. (please use the lighter blue chairs that are in the library for this activity). A non-competitive version of Musical chairs is Musical Shares. After every round, a chair is taken away, but everyone in the group still sits down – no one is removed from the game – it can get a little crowded once you're down to one or two chairs...