

“Fortissimo Between Saul and David”

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*1st Presbyterian Church
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I Samuel 16:14-23; 18:10-11
II Samuel 5:1-3; 6:5*

This morning there is music in the air... I said, this morning there is music in the air...(good! Right!)

Most all of us love music. We all have our particular tastes in music, from classical to death metal. I lean toward one of those, but I'll keep you guessing. Of course, music moves us – uplifts us – inspires us – it can transport us – with its power!

Often it raises the volume! Parents, have you noticed that?! Have you ever politely suggested to your offspring to lower the decibel level of the beautiful arrangement of drums and guitar that they are listening to at 3 trillion decibels?

Fortissimo - was cranked up!

Fortissimo – very loud!

In music, even classical – there are times when Fortissimo is legitimate, certain times, mind you.

I love Tchaikovsky's "Violin Concerto in D." The concerto is breath taking. Its 30 some minutes transport the listener to a realm of wordless, glorious beauty! The first movement begins quietly with violins and orchestra, giving us a glimpse of what is to come. The violin takes over and leads the orchestra through calm paths, gradually taking us higher and higher. Fortissimo is building. The great height is teased with, until it arrives in wondrous tones.

Magnificent!

Fortissimo!

I wonder about the person taking this experience in – and not being moved, often to tears. How Tchaikovsky sings to the soul! How he, through his own turbulent and delirious days, took notes which were on paper and made them cry out – reaching into the hearts of human born and yet to be born.

And perhaps Sibelius' "Violin Concerto in D" takes us even further into the sublime – deeper into our souls.

Fortissimo!

Fortissimo – “a very loud passage, sound, or tone.” In music – fortissimo normally builds. It doesn't just appear. Through a process – the music finally reaches that point of great strength, and the listener is captured in its overwhelming power!

On one level that's the way our lives should be lived. With cognizant direction – we take control of what we can control – and begin to play our life's music – ever building toward – that great expression of fulfillment – fortissimo! We find our music (within) and we build toward our fulfillment – our inner strength!

Great stories also build toward fortissimo.

One slice of this human building toward fortissimo – strength and fulfillment – is the Hebrew saga of Saul and David. There is beauty and strength in this narrative. The people of Israel – having gone through times of weakness and times of victory – told this story – a tribute to their experience of building toward fortissimo – strength and fulfillment.

This is a human story – love, hate, betrayal, hope, violence, acceptance – the whole span of human experience is present. That is why it still has the power to speak, could I say sing to us today?

Prior to Saul, this loose confederation of tribes has been ruled by Judges – not Kings. Well, the people decide they too want a King, like the other people around them. Samuel (the last judge) is told by God – go ahead – we will give them a King. God is not pleased. I also wonder about Samuel, the prophet and judge – he is about to give up his power. Never an easy thing to do. God reluctantly consents. “Samuel...make for them a King...”

Saul is anointed King – the people are happy. But not for long. After this Saul is rejected twice by God.

Turmoil reigns. Even Samuel is upset. Samuel may have been thinking, “But I thought with Saul – we were building toward our fulfillment. That our strength would increase. But, now Saul is rejected. What's going on?” God basically tells Samuel – “Get over it. Saul is out, finished, caput.” (Zanicky translation). “Get on with your life and the life of your people. By the way Sam, go and anoint a new King. What Saul doesn't know – will hurt him.” Saul is still King! Samuel is nervous about anointing a new King when the other one is still breathing, and likes to throw spears.

As I noted last week, God suggests a bit of subterfuge. “Ah, let's see. Say you're going on a trip, and, ah, yes, a trip, and you are going to make a sacrifice there. Yes, that's it!”

Samuel goes to Jesse's place and says, “Hey, I'm here to sacrifice, you wanna come along, it's a nice day and all.” Jesse and his boys go along – Samuel, sizes up the fellows – “ This one?”

God says, “Nope!”

After seven sons and seven “no's” Samuel asks, “...is this all you've got?”

Jesse has one more son – a little guy with a good heart. “He's the one!” Samuel anoints Davy and Samuel leaves, leaving the family bewildered – I would guess.

“Thanks for letting me anoint you Davy, King over Israel. You'll be hearing from me. We'll do lunch.”

Now Saul is depressed. He is in a bad state of mind. (The story is illustrating how Saul is out, and David is on his way in.)

Life is building and building...

Notice, that Sigmund, I mean Samuel was not brought in to delve into Saul's relationship with his mother; nor was he given two aspirin, a hot toddy and told to go to sleep. (Now all of this might have helped – but of the best they had available – they chose music. Music, as therapy for the failing - Saul.

Saul is tormented. From experience – they knew that music refreshed – music was capable of alleviating much of the pain. They did not know of the intricacies of the mind and body – but they knew that at times music helped – it provided relief and solace.

Is this not true today?

Certain music had healing powers, all building toward life's Fortissimo.

David, secretly anointed King. Saul does not know this. But David becomes the source of his healing through music. Saul loves David, but soon feels threatened; what with Goliath, Mr. Personality and all. (“As the World Turns” has nothing on the Bible.)

David is again playing music for the troubled Saul, but Saul's depression, his rage cannot be assuaged, nor tempered. The perceived instrument of Saul's downfall is the one offering him the melodies of calm. But, they turn into chords of terror and anger.

Music – has multiple levels of power.
Just like life.

Music can be dangerous. Just as it quiets, and brings tears of elation, so too it can shock and jar our sensibilities – fuel our lusts, our tempers.

Life's journey is so complicated – as fortissimo builds.

Music has sparked the throwing of many a spear. Emotions and music are a potent mix. Wagner's music of the 20th century – a case in point. Fortunately David is also quick on his feet – dodges the spears – twice!

It is not always easy to dodge those spears that fly toward us.

In this story (and I've left out more than I have shared) the fortissimo – the strength and fulfillment of a people as depicted in their hero David – reaches its crescendo – when David is made King – over Judah and Israel.

David is King! Bring out the instruments and raise your voices!

It is time to celebrate – with songs, lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals.

Fortissimo!

Just in these brief thoughts of Saul and David – taken from Israel's saga – *did you notice the highs and lows of life's journey?*

Did you notice the good and evil spirits?

How about the anguish and depression of Saul, or the elation of joy over David's Kingship? Recall that the almost neglected son – was the one anointed King?

But – throughout all of the story, the music was building – for Israel interpreted their life (and here’s the key!) as possessing meaning and purpose!

All of this is fraught with danger, but the process must go on – toward purpose – toward meaning – in a God of love and justice – who calls all of us to sing, to shout out our developing, building lives – culminating in fulfilled potential – a life lived worthy of such a God given gift – called life.

Keep on building!

Keep on adding to the intensity – the God given fortissimo of love and life!

Amen.