

Acts 5:12, 17-32 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. ¹⁷ Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, ¹⁸ and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. ¹⁹ But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." ²¹ And when they heard *that*, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²² But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, ²³ saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" ²⁴ Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. ²⁵ So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" ²⁶ Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. ²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸ saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" ²⁹ But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. ³⁰ "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹ "Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² "And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so also is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

The spotlight comes on. The master pianist takes the stage and sits down at the baby grand. As he begins to press the ivory keys, the music begins to flow out of the piano. As it goes out it, it fills the whole auditorium with beautiful melodies. The audience can not help but be caught up in the movement of the beautiful music all around them. The pianist plays and people are simply drawn to the beauty of the music.

Oh, the pianist could begin his concert with a long talk about how the whole audience must enjoy the concert because it is technically superior to others and, therefore, commands enjoyment. But that talk would not draw anyone to the music. Instead the master pianist simply plays and allows the music to draw the people to itself. The audience does not need to be told they have to enjoy the music. They simply will do so as they hear it reach their ears. Music just has that ability to draw people to itself.

After Jesus resurrection and before His ascension, Jesus explained to the Apostles that they were to take off where He had left off. They were to take the song that Jesus had played with such perfection out to the whole world. So after they saw Jesus ascend back into heaven, Peter and the Apostles went into Jerusalem and into the temple and began to play the gracious melody of Jesus' love. The notes which they struck were those that vibrated of a Lord who had died, had rose, and had ascended back to the throne of heaven. The chords which were played rang of a Lord who had come to give sinners a chance to repent of their sins and receive freely the salvation of their souls. Indeed, the apostles filled the whole city of Jerusalem with their song.

The same chief priests who had tried to silence Jesus also tried to silence the Apostles' music by throwing them into prison, but God would not allow this message to be silenced. So, He miraculously released them from prison in the middle of the night. He did it so that the gracious melody of His love could continue to be heard by all in Jerusalem. He told them to strike the keys long and loud that everyone might hear about and believe in Him. And so they played on, telling all of the new life that Jesus had earned at the empty tomb.

However, when the chief priests heard them again playing in the temple that same old song, they became irate. They called them again into their presence, and reminded them that the melody which they played was a forbidden tune. They instructed them that that tune was never to ring out again from their mouths again. They wanted the music to stop. But Peter told them that the song they played was the song which God had requested that they play. Oh it might not sound beautiful to everyone or be everyone favorite, but it was music in God's ears. It was the kind of music that draws people to itself. Peter and the other apostles didn't have to tell people that they should believe in Jesus, they simply played the melody of Jesus' love and people were drawn to Him.

We too have witnessed our Lord Resurrection. Over 200 of us gathered here last week to celebrate that our Lord was not dead, but alive. And it was great to have the church full. But do you realize that there were 80 of our members that were not here on that most special day. Ask any of the churches in town and they will tell you that even on Easter not everyone shows up. Add to that the fact that there are plenty of people in Ellsworth County who don't belong to any church, and we can begin to envision a county just waiting to be filled with the gracious melody of Jesus' love. We are called to fill the county of Ellsworth with the music that

we sang with joy last week. If our shouts of “Jesus Christ is Risen Today” do not escape these walls, we have failed to play the song as God has requested. God indeed wants this church to be filled with the gracious melody of Jesus’ love, but He wants more. He wants the whole county filled with the message of Jesus and His resurrection.

Ours is not to go out and convince people that they should be in church or that they should believe in Jesus. Ours is simply to take the gracious melody of Jesus to them. That melody will draw people to itself. We simply hit the right notes and the tune will go out. We place our fingers upon keys that speak of a Lord who died, who rose, and who has ascended back to heaven. We strike the chords that tell people that Jesus wants to give to them salvation from their sins. And as we play, people will be caught up in the melody. The Spirit will move them to faith as the message of grace resonates in their soul. He will lead them to faith through baptism.

If we do not play, we deprive the world of the greatest melody ever composed. For, not even Bach or Beethoven can match the melody of grace that our Lord wrote with His suffering, death and resurrection. If we do not play, the world will simply have to sit in the dreadfully quiet silence that sin brings into life. There are ears in our county that are just waiting to be filled with a joyous song rather than being clogged with the darkness that Satan offers them in place of God’s true melody of love.

All too often we have played nothing for we are convinced that we don’t know the right song to play. But we do. It is the same song that comforts us. We simply are called to play the same notes that bring us comfort. We repeat the gracious song that our Lord has played for us in His Word.

But anyone knows that playing anything in public can be quite nerve-wrecking. And that is why God has granted us six weeks in the church year to celebrate Easter. As we gather week after week, God hums the gracious melody of Jesus’ love into our ears time and time again. For if that song was only played once into our ears, we might not fully remember how it goes. But as God continues to play the melody of Jesus’ death and resurrection in our ears for six weeks, it will by God’s spirit become one of those songs that we just can’t get out of our head. We will find ourselves humming the song as we go to work, as we go to school, as we sit at home. And soon, the melody will be become so familiar that we will be ready to play it whenever we have the chance.

And then we will begin to fill this county with that song. And as we fill this county with that song, people will be caught up in the music. The spirit will work faith and draw people to Jesus.

Other may tell us that we need to be quiet with our song or try to tell us how to sing it so that we do not offend anyone, but to these people we will confess with Peter, “We must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead-- whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” We must sing! Amen!