

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures: 1 Chronicles 15:16-28

Kenaniah, The Very Gifted Musician

The Rev. Tom Hagood

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There was no doubt about it. I was a lovesick little boy. I can remember the first time I met Miss Kawasaki as she greeted me at the door of my first-grade classroom. Her soft brown hair ... her hazel colored eyes ... and that sweet smile when she spoke to me. She was so much prettier than Miss Landers on “Leave It to Beaver” or Miss Crump on “The Andy Griffin Show.”

All my anxiety about going to school melted away that first day ... it certainly looked like going to school was going to be all right. I would do anything for Miss Kawasaki. If she asked for a volunteer ... my hand would go right up ... didn't matter what the request.

Oh sure ... there was the difference in our ages ... but I could overcome that ... just because she was 24 and I was only 6 ... it really didn't matter when love was involved. Miss Kawasaki was someone worth doing homework for ... she was someone who definitely merited more than just an apple placed on her desk ... as a matter of fact, I would actually wear a tie to class just to impress her.

But one day ... on a Friday in the middle of the winter of my first year of school ... I had to face a harsh reality that life sometimes throws at you. Out of nowhere ... a tall Marine in uniform ... he must have been at least seven or eight feet tall ... strolled into our classroom ... and without so much as a warning to me ... Miss Kawasaki told me ... and I suppose the rest of the class ... that she and this “soldier” were going to be married and that she would be leaving.

I was blindsided ... my dreams were suddenly shattered. This wasn't the way it was supposed to be ... and in the blink of an eye ... my world changed. Two weeks later, Mrs. Anderson was sitting at the desk where my love used to sit.

It really doesn't matter how young or old you are ... change and transitions are always difficult. It happens all the time in our personal lives ... as well as in the life of the church. Sometimes someone we love dies ... and sometimes someone we love moves away. And quite honestly ... it can be quite sad. Even painful.

There doesn't seem to be anyone who can take their place ... and we grieve. I can think back on so many saints of this church who have left us ... be it through death or just moving away to some far off place. We've lost members who lived their lives making a difference in this church as disciples of Christ ... who gave unselfishly of their time, talents and gifts.

We've also had to say goodbye to countless young seminarians and their families who through the years became a rich part of the life of this church. And somehow ... through all the many losses and changes and transitions we've endured and will endure ... God continued and continues to provide for us ... even as we say goodbye to David Flick today.

You see ... David isn't the first organist or choirmaster this church ever had. There were many

dedicated leaders before him ... and as each one moved on ... the church moved through another transition in its music program. Anyone know who the first choirmaster was? but does anyone know who was actually the very FIRST choirmaster ever mentioned in the scriptures?

He was fella by the name of Kenaniah. Ever heard of him? He was actually the first choirmaster ... no ... he never directed our chancel choir ... but he was THE first choirmaster of the Hebrew people. So in one sense, he really is our first choirmaster ... and David Flick is one of a long line of choirmasters ... stretching through the centuries ... who followed Kenaniah ... who were called by God into the ministry of music and worship.

So listen now to the word of our Lord as we hear how King David organized the people into a congregation of worshippers ... who made a joyful noise unto the Lord. Our reading is from the Hebrew scriptures, I Chronicles, chapter 15, verses 16-28. I will be reading from Eugene Peterson's translation, *The Message*.

16 David ordered the heads of the Levites to assign their relatives to sing in the choir, accompanied by a well-equipped marching band, and fill the air with joyful sound.

17 The Levites assigned He-man son of Joel, and from his family, A-saph son of Ber-e-kiah, then Ethan son of Kush-ai-ah from the family of Me-ra-ri,

18 and after them in the second rank their brothers Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shem-ir-a-moth, Je-hiel, Un-ni, E-li-ab, Ben-ai-ah, Maas-ei-ah, Matt-i-thiah, Eli-phel-e-hu, Mik-neiah, Obed-Edom, and Je-iel as security guards.

19 The members of the choir and marching band were: Heman, Asaph, and Ethan with bronze cymbals;

20 Zechariah, Aziel, Shem-ir-a-moth, Je-hiel, Un-ni, E-li-ab, Maas-e-iah, and Ben-ai-ah with lyres carrying the melody;

21 Matt-i-thi-ah, Eli-phel-e-hu, Mik-ne-iah, Obed-Edom, Je-iel, and Az-a-ziah with harps filling in the harmony;

22 Kenaniah, the Levite in charge of music, a very gifted musician, was music director.

23 Ber-e-kiah and El-kan-ah were porters for the Chest.

24 The priests Sheb-a-niah, Joshaphat, Neth-a-nel, Am-a-sai, Zechariah, Ben-ai-ah, and Eli-e-zer blew the trumpets before the Chest of God. Obed-Edom and Je-hiah were also porters for the Chest.

25 Now they were ready. David, the elders of Israel, and the commanders of thousands started out to get the Chest of the Covenant of God and bring it up from the house of Obed-Edom. And they went rejoicing.

26 Because God helped the Levites, strengthening them as they carried the Chest of the Covenant of God, they paused to worship by sacrificing seven bulls and seven rams.

27 They were all dressed in elegant linen—David, the Levites carrying the Chest, the choir and band, and Kenaniah who was directing the music. David also wore a linen prayer shawl (called an ephod).

28 On they came, all Israel on parade bringing up the Chest of the Covenant of God, shouting and cheering, playing every kind of brass and percussion and string instrument.

This is the word of our Lord. **Thanks be to God!** Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy Sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

If you recall, the first time David tried to bring the ark of the covenant into the holy city of Jerusalem, things didn't work out too well. As a matter of fact, one poor fellow lost his life when he tried to prevent it from falling over. But this time ... after some intense studying of the Torah ... everything is done decently and in order.

And in this process of bringing in the ark ... you actually end up with the introduction of an order of worship for the Hebrew people ... with further instructions that continue through the book of 1 Chronicles. You don't find this kind of instruction in the New Testament. Even Paul's many letters to various churches don't provide a formula for a certain style of worship ... because probably most early churches were still prescribing to the rudiments of worship attributed to David.

These early writings have had a profound impact on how we ... as 21st century worshippers ... continue to worship today. And at the heart of this worship ... is music ... something King David deeply loved. So I can just imagine the search that ensued for the right choirmaster.

And David chose Kenaniah, a Levite who was a very gifted musician, to be in charge of his worship music. Can you imagine what this guy had to do? Kenaniah had to create something that had never been created before ... a church choir. Now I don't know if this is true or not ... but there is a story that the first choir had some real problems ... it seems that none of the sopranos could sing higher than the altos ... all of the basses sang higher than the altos ... the altos couldn't sing at all ... and all of the music was dated B.C. (Before Caesar).

But a gifted musician can work wonders ... and Kenaniah turned that ragtag group of Hebrew musicians and singers into a harmonious assembly ... the first choir ... and together with the other worship leaders ... they made beautiful music together to the glory of God.

Though we don't know the details of the rest of the story ... there is no doubt that the day came when Kenaniah, for whatever reason, stepped down as the choirmaster. It was a time of change ... of grieving ... of transition. Who could possibly take over his position? Who could possibly do what he had been doing all of this time ... wouldn't everything just fall apart?

Well ... you already know the answer to those questions. You see ... we are a part of that answer ... this choir behind me is part of the answer to those questions. King David and his first choir ... under the leadership of Kenaniah ... came into existence some 3,000 years ago ... and here today ... a dedicated choir still sings ... a wonderfully talented organist and choirmaster still helps lead worship ... as we gather in this place Sunday after Sunday to worship our Lord.

And though David Flick is going to be leaving us today ... the Lord will continue to provide for this church ... and another organist/choirmaster in the long line of Kenaniahs will soon be leading this choir and us in joyfully singing the hymns of praise to our Lord. Yes ... it is a time of transition for Columbia Presbyterian Church ... a time of change ... even a time of grief as we say goodbye to David ... but is also a time of great expectation and hope because the Lord is already preparing for us someone who will take David's place. . . a new organist and choirmaster ... a new talented individual who will come and serve with us in our worship.

This person won't be filling the shoes of David Flick ... even though David's rich gifts will always remain with us. Whoever God is preparing for us ... will bring his or her own gifts ... his or her own talents ... his or her own dedication to this most important part of our worship experience.

Because, like King David, we, too, recognize the central importance of music in our worship of God. We did so back in 1947 when this church was founded ... we did 19 years ago when David Flick joined us ... and we will continue to do so into the future as God leads us.

You see ... on that sad day of my life back in the first grade ... I thought school would never be the same again. Miss Kawasaki was leaving. It seemed no one could take her place. But you know, Mrs. Anderson turned out all right. I still enjoyed the first grade. As a matter of fact ... I still wore that tie to school once in a while.

And you know what ... we're going to be all right, too. David Flick has graced us with his wonderful talents for many years. And I thank God for him. And believe me ... there is some very fortunate congregation somewhere up in Tennessee that will soon be lifting up a joyful noise with David sitting at their organ bench.

But in the meantime ... we will continue to make our own joyful noise ... singing our praises to God ... one note at a time ... as we await God's promises.

Let us pray:
Let every instrument be tuned for praise!
Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise!
And may God give us faith to sing always.
Alleluia ... Alleluia ... Alleluia!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.