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Sermon Notes

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Dancing to the World's Tune or to God's

Matthew 11:16-19

I. Competing Music

There are two different strains of music permeating our universe... one the Song of God and of the Lamb, one the song of the devil and of his world

Both are alluring, both enticing, both powerfully effective... to which are you moving?

A. The Song of Creation

Illus. C.S.Lewis, Aslan's Song in *Chronicles of Narnia*

"The Lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave. In a few minutes it was creeping up the lower slopes of the distant mountains, making that young world ever softer."

As the chapter unfolds, the Lion kept on singing, and as he did, more and more of the world was created and filled with life...

"All this time the Lion's song, and his stately prowl, to and fro, backwards and forwards, was going on... Polly was finding the song more and more interesting because she thought she was beginning to see the connection between the music and the things that were happening. When a line of dark firs sprang up on a ridge about a hundred yards away, she felt they were connected to a series of deep, prolonged notes which the Lion had sung a second before. And when he burst into a rapid series of lighter notes she was not surprised to see primroses suddenly appearing in every direction. Thus with an unspeakable thrill, she felt quite certain that all things were coming (as she said) 'out of the Lion's head.' When you listened to the song you heard the things he was making up: when you looked round you, you saw them."

B. The Song of Rebellion

When the devil enticed Adam and Eve to join his rebellion, he somehow tricked our race into dancing to his tune... we've been hearing the devil's tune and dancing to it ever since!

It is the song of the world... the song of rebellion... the alluring, enticing, sensuous strain of selfishness, worldliness, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, boastful pride of life

It has a perverse attractiveness, but it is not beautiful... it is the way of the world and its essence is rebellion

Christ spoke of this tune in our passage today:

vs. 16-17 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 17 "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

C. The Song of Redemption

Christ sang it first:

Hebrews 2:11-12 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

All creation will follow His song:

Revelation 5:9-13 And [the twenty-four elders] sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Today's question: Whose music are you hearing, whose music are you loving... the world's or God's?

II. Standing Firm Against World's Enticing Tune

A. Resisting Peer Pressure

1. Peer pressure a powerful force
2. Parental concern always has to do with negative influences
 - smoking, drinking, relationships with opposite sex, hanging out with wrong crowd, dress patterns, musical tastes
3. Influences can destroy everything the parents have worked for

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good character."

Reality is that every single normal human being struggles with peer pressure

vs. 16-17 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

Jesus identified this force in his own time... the desire people have to make others dance to their tune

B. Constant Force: Concern for Human Approval

1. From childhood: yearning for love and acceptance

Illus. Nathaniel clapping at Bible study... everyone laughed and smiled and clapped with him... he looked around, and immediately wanted to do it again

2. Parental approval or disapproval a powerful force
3. School experiences: other students fit into pattern... a desire to conform

C. System of Approved Actions & Attitudes: Culture

1. Japan: polished ancient culture
 - orchestrated system of bowing... who bows lower in which situation

patterns of speech, including honorific titles... different greetings based on situation

2. Japanese peer pressure intense:

constant pressure to conform, to fit in

Japanese culture encourages this... all school children wear exact same clothes

Illus. Japanese saying "The nail that stands up will be smashed down."

3. Worldwide culture:

a people's mutual agreement on how everything is to be done

manners a reflection of submission to culture

Illus. Which fork you use for salad, which for the main entrée... which glass you drink from, etc.

Desire to please people the pressure

If you commit a social gaffe, everyone gasps and you'll never forget it again the rest of your life

Peer pressure, the desire to conform, can be an overwhelming force

4. American culture's overwhelming force

Liberal media uses shame to force us to accept their agenda

- a. have same attitudes we do about everything
- b. agree with us as to what's shocking, what's sad, what's joyful
- c. if you don't agree with us, we'll put you to shame

Advertisers: attitudes toward possessions, toward male-female roles, toward marital relations, toward dating, toward diversity

Illus. "**Diversity training**" in public schools: forcing students to accept open, tolerant attitudes about what they call "sexual preference"... but what the Bible calls "sexual perversion", homosexuality

Same is true on **feminism**... forcing all Americans to accept their definitions of male-female roles

Same is true on **animal rights**... certainly true on **abortion**... may soon be true on **cloning**

America's "powers that be" are playing the tune... if Christians don't dance, they'll be ridiculed

like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

D. Desire to Please People Not a Bad Thing... in Proper Proportion

1. Jesus grew in favor with men

Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

In other word, Jesus grew in His knowledge and lifestyle in what was pleasing to those around Him

2. People with absolutely no concern for pleasing people are sociopaths
3. BUT Jesus also warned against yearning for human praise

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

The mark of being a true prophet of God: the willingness to tell the truth to sinners even if they reject you; the willingness to live the truth surrounded by sinners, even if they stone you to death

E. Fear of Man: One of the Greatest Inhibitors to the Gospel

Proverbs 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

1. Ultimately living for human praise can keep you out of heaven

John 5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

Peer pressure can keep a person from openly trusting Christ

What will my friends think? I'll be cast out!!

John 12:42-43 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

2. Fear of man can keep Christians from proclaiming and living the Gospel

Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

F. Today's Question: Is Peer Pressure an Irresistible Force?

Jesus said it is not... and in fact mandates that we must resist dancing to the piper's tune of human opinion

III. Two Role Models: John the Baptist and Jesus

A. John the Baptist: Not a "Reed Swayed by the Wind"

1. Context: Jesus' Assessment of John the Baptist

2. John's **Appearance**: Not "Culturally Acceptable"

camel's hair: rough and uncomfortable... certainly not "fashionable"

leather belt: functional, not stylish

3. John's **Lifestyle**: A constant rebuke to pleasure-seeking Israelites

food: locusts and wild honey... barely enough to subsist on

housing: essentially homeless

Hebrews 11:38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

3. John's **Ministry**: Shocking to Jewish sensibilities

baptism was for unwashed Gentile dogs, when they converted to the Laws of Moses

John used it with JEWS... in effect saying "you're as filthy as Gentiles in God's eyes"

4. John's **Preaching**: "All on Fire"... certainly not "tickling their ears"

5. John's **Religion**: Total disregard for the narrow confines of Phariseeic regulations

- when the scribes and Pharisees said "fast" John ignored it

- when the scribes and Pharisees said “feast” John ignored it
- when the scribes and Pharisees said “drink” John ignored it
- when the scribes and Pharisees said “abstain” John ignored it

In the Jewish religious scene, if you wanted to succeed, you had to “go along to get along”

When they played the flute, you had to dance to their tune

When they played a dirge, you had to sit and cry

vs. 16-17 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

You had to kow-tow to Annas, the High Priest

You had to follow all their minute regulations

In order to do that, you had to enroll in their religious schools

John never did!!! He lived in total disdain for the Jewish religious system... even stood over it and preached against it

Matthew 3:7-8 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

John was dangerous to their power... he was a loose cannon, and they hated him for it

6. John was utterly fearless... took on King Herod’s marriage to Herodias
7. John’s fearlessness would cause his death
8. John did not live to please people, but only did the will of Him who sent Him

Jesus assessed this man as follows:

Matthew 11:11 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist

No secular figure was greater than John the Baptist:

No mighty emperor: Not Sargon the Assyrian, Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians, Alexander the Great (but John was greater!!), Julius Caesar or Caesar Augustus

No wise philosopher: Not Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, or any of the Greek sages; not Confucius or Siddhartha Gautama (who came to be known as Buddha)

No clever scientist: Not Archimedes or Ptolemy

Not even any Biblical hero: Not faithful Noah, not Abraham (friend of God and father of many nations), not Moses (the mighty deliverer who faced down Pharaoh and all the power of Egypt), not courageous David, not wise Solomon, not patient Job, not visionary Isaiah, not weeping Jeremiah, not pure and holy Daniel

Not one of these great men of history and of faith was greater than John

Why? Among the reasons was John's purity from the world's pollution... his total dedication to pleasing God and bearing the fiercest messages God had ever put on the lips of a man

John lived apart from the world of men and soared above it... by faith he conquered "peer pressure" because all He cared about was the will of God

Yet, John was NOTHING in this matter compared with the holy Son of God, Jesus Christ

Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

B. Jesus: "Not Swayed by Men"

1. Jesus lived for only one thing: to please His heavenly Father

2. Constantly angered religious establishment

healed on the Sabbath

called God His own Father

refused to follow their man-made traditions of hand-washing and other traditions

preached openly against the Scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites

3. Rejected human praise

John 5:41 "I do not accept praise from men..."

4. Lived constantly for only one thing: to please His heavenly Father

John 5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

John 6:38-39 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

This perspective is the only one which can survive the onslaught of peer pressure

IV. Praise from Man or Praise from God?

- A. Simple Choice: Who's Praise Do You Seek?

Luke 6:22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

- B. Both Sides Will Force a Choice

1. The Father Will Force the Choice

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

2. The World Will Force the Choice

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

C. The Salvation of Your Soul Depends on Seeking God's Praise

John 5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

1. Jesus clearly set this matter as of eternal significance
2. It is impossible to please both public opinion and God
3. Your soul depends on seeing by faith that God's praise is worth more than all the momentary adulation of the world

Illus. You must empty your hands of praise from men in order to receive praise from God

D. John and Jesus: Lived Only to Please God

1. They heard heavenly tune... danced to it... music only they could hear
2. World's tune drowned out... seems ridiculous

Note: those who dance to the world's music will seem utterly foolish to those who live for eternity

Thos who dance to God's music will seem utterly foolish to those who live for today

V. Prophetic Role: Either Loved or Hated

vs. 18-19 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." 'But wisdom is proved right by her actions.'

Martin Luther: "Always preach in such a way that when you are finished, men will either hate you or hate their sin!"

Life is like a road, traveling... we are called to be a fork in someone's road—if they listen, wonderful! If not, they may attack you unfairly

A. John Confronted Sin: The Jews Rejected Him Unfairly

1. Because John did not eat and drink like them, the Jews said he was demon-possessed
2. Real issue: they hated his preaching of righteousness

"Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

B. Jesus Confronted Sin: The Jews Rejected Him Unfairly

1. Because Jesus did not eat and drink like them, the Jews pushed to extremes and said He was glutton and drunkard

NOTE: This verse absolutely proves that Jesus drank wine... for He says "The Son of Man came eating and drinking." Why else would Jesus turn water into wine?

However... Jesus never was drunk, for that is sin... AND the wine of that era was extremely dilute compared to our age

Yet, there is some teaching that Jesus would never have taken any fermentation into His body, for that would have meant taking corruption inside Him

2. Real Issue Here: Jesus Independence of Human Praise, Human Wisdom, Human Timetables

The servant of God is free from ultimate concern about human opinion... but harsh judgments and unfair will be our lot if we tell the world the truth

VI. Power of Wisdom: Final Vindication

vs. 19 Wisdom is vindicated by her actions.

A. Evil Peer Pressure Leads to Condemnation

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

Following the crowd in doing evil results in individual condemnation

Your friends will not stand with you on your day in court!!

B. "Wisdom" Is the Fear of the Lord

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

1. A "Wise" Life: origins in the fear of the Lord
2. John and Jesus were wise in their day... shunning concern for popular opinion

3. They will be vindicated in the end!!

C. Companion of Fools, or Companion of the Lord?

Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

D. God's Music Is Eternally Beautiful

1. Culture's call is alluring... music enchanting

- a. enticing to "fit in with the crowd"
- b. alluring you to dance and move to its rhythms
- c. like Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego

Daniel 3:5-6 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

- 2. Easy to be seduced or threatened into dancing
- 3. God's music is eternally beautiful
 - a. the music He sings into your soul

Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

Illus. Like Aslan's Song in *Chronicles of Narnia*

- b. the music you will sing in response

Revelation 15:2-4 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to

your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Crown Him with Many Crowns the Lamb upon His throne... **Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own."**

In heaven, Satan's discordant notes, his perverse worldviews, his lies and enticements will all be drowned in the lake of fire

In heaven, the song that God created when He first made the heavens and the earth... the song He caused to be born again in your hearts but only faintly heard now... the song you yearn to hear and to sing with all your heart

That song you will sing forever and ever!!

"What wondrous love is this...?"

To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing... to God and to the Lamb I will sing; To God and to the Lamb who is the great I AM, While millions join the theme I will sing, I will sing... while millions join the theme I will sing

And when from death I'm free I'll sing on, I'll sing on... and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free I'll sing and joyful be; and through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and through eternity I'll sing on

VII. Applications: Whose Music Do You Hear?

Key question: Are you dancing to the world's tune or moving according to God's music?

A. Assess Yourself: Do You Care More About Human Praise or God's Praise

1. Assess your worldview:

Modern media: anti-God, pluralistic, tolerant of evil, sex-crazed, materialistic, pleasure-seeking, accomplishment oriented, frantically busy, feminist, environmentally active, anti-authoritarian

Reverence for Darwin, Freud, Bill Gates, etc.

2. Assess your lifestyle

- B. Reject Human Praise: It is Temporary
- C. Hunger and Thirst for God's Praise
- D. Saturate Your Mind and Heart in Scripture

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- E. Be Eager to Pay the Price for Listening to God's Music

Illus. "Red Badge of Courage"... are you willing—actually eager—to be scorned by the world??