

Sermon Title: The Power of the Arts – August 24, 2013 (Scripture is from the ESV)

Introduction

Hello everyone. It's good to be up here for another Joint Prayer Meeting.

OTP Update

Before I go into the sermon I want to give you guys a brief update on Oak Tree Project, a scholarship and mentoring program Jerusalem Ministry set up for orphans desiring to attend college. After raising funds last year we were able to accept four students who are being mentored by Pastor Sky, myself, Pastor Jee, and Mijeong.

Slide 1 – Picture of family lunch

It is now August and we are at the halfway point of our first year mentoring these four kids. The three boys are all first years at a university south of Seoul. Our one girl is a second year at a theater arts university in Seoul. The girl and one of our boys love the Lord and have been growing with him. The other two boys are not Christian, but their hearts are gradually opening up. While they are required to attend church and take sermon notes and also read books we assign them, their hearts have been opened more by our weekly phone calls and by our meetings once a month. The program is becoming less formal for them and more like family. They look forward to the phone calls and to the meetings. These kids were all raised in orphanages and each have their own scars and their own ways of coping with them. One non-Christian boy has almost erased all of his past and does not want to bring anything up. The other non-Christian boy also has trouble getting in touch with his emotions. One of his friends unexpectedly died in a motorcycle crash recently and he didn't shed a tear. All of the kids were a bit cautious early on in our mentoring with them, but they have been warming up more and more.

This picture here is of when we had a “family lunch” in July all together. We made lunch for them and spent a good amount of time together. These meetings mean a lot to the kids. We know that this is just the beginning and we are excited for the future of these students and of the many more that Oak Tree Project will reach.

This past week we booked a concert hall near Samseong Station for our next benefit concert. It will be held on the evening of Friday, October 11th at 백암아트홀 (Baekam Art Hall). 박주원 (Park Ju Won) and La Ventana will be performing. Park Ju Won is one of the top guitarists in Korea (check youtube) and he performed at our first benefit concert in 2011. La Ventana is a jazz group who will also be performing, and we might have some other special guests. All proceeds from the concert will be going straight to the scholarship/mentoring fund. So if you go you can consider your ticket as an offering to the kids.

Please pull out your smartphones and save that date for us: Friday, October 11th. Thank you for your prayers and your support for this ministry. We are believing great things for these kids and for this program. Now before I get into the sermon, let me say a prayer for us...

Pray

Sermon Time

I love Joint Prayer Meeting. I'm always excited to preach here and God usually gives me special words for these meetings. God typically gives me heavy, solemn messages for JPM,

but tonight the topic is going to be a bit lighter... I think. The title of the sermon is, “**The Power of the Arts.**”

I’m going to begin my sermon with a statement perhaps many of you have thought much about, “**Many artists and entertainers have left greater legacies than the world leaders of their day.**” I want to encourage you to write that down. I’ll say it again, “Many artists and entertainers have left greater legacies than the world leaders of their day.”

Let’s put this to the test with some pictures of world leaders and artists and entertainers...

Slide 2 – Shakespeare

Who of you know who this first person is? Even if you don’t know who he is, I can almost guarantee you will recognize one of his many famous works, “Romeo and Juliet.” Shakespeare.

Next slide (allow me to signal you)

Slide 3 – King James

Who of you know who this person is? Probably not so many, even though he was just as important as Shakespeare at the time. In fact, he was king over Shakespeare. This picture is of King James, the man whom the King James Version of the Bible is named after. He was the man who led England in colonizing America, specifically Virginia. During his life he had much more authoritative power than Shakespeare, but I imagine Shakespeare had and still has far more influence. That is the power of the arts.

I could do others. Many of you have probably heard of the famous composer Johann Sebastian Bach. But do you know who his king was that he often had to perform in front of? King Augustus the Third of Poland, who probably doesn’t ring a bell. You’re likely to recognize names like Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Beethoven, Mozart, Van Gogh, and other famous artists and entertainers. But the popes and kings of their time? Aside from Napoleon, probably not too many. And I doubt many of you can name many of the battles Napoleon won, but you could name or recognize the Mona Lisa of Da Vinci or the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. Why? **Because arts and entertainment transcend languages, cultures, and time.**

Slide 4 – Arts and entertainment transcend languages, cultures, and time

Let’s give this a test. The following artist could not speak English and died long before any of you were born. Most of you could not relate to the culture he was raised in. But I bet you will recognize his work, even though this painting wasn’t one of his famous ones...

Slide 5 – Picasso’s Three Musicians

That is the work of Pablo Picasso. You might think he never influenced you, but most of you could still recognize his work. Why? Because his work is unique. It likely caused you to see pictures or objects in a new perspective. That is the power of art. Some of Picasso’s paintings are priced today at \$50 million with his most expensive painting being \$106.5 million dollars. In other words one Picasso painting is worth multiple luxury, private jets.

Now let's have some fun and look at some more modern artists and entertainers. Let's see how many you recognize. I could easily start with the top of the top... people like Beyonce, Michael Jordan, Jay-Z, Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, or other top artists and entertainers of today. That's too easy. You would recognize Steve Jobs and President Obama as well. But let's go with the second bests of their trade.

Let's start with the best supporting actress of 2013. Please silently raise your hand if you recognize her...

Slide 6 – Anne Hathaway

How many of you recognize her? Her name is Anne Hathaway.

Let's go with basketball. This guy isn't Michael Jordan, but he isn't too far behind...

Slide 7 – Kobe Bryant

My wife recognized him! His name is Kobe Bryant. For many of you who don't even care about sports you likely recognized him.

Slide 8 – Joe Biden

How about this guy? I'll be honest, I didn't recognize him and I didn't know his name. But he is the Vice President of the United States: Joe Biden. If something happens to President Obama then this guy becomes the second most powerful man in the world. And if I hadn't prepared these slides then I would have no idea who he was.

Let's try this one...

Slide 9 – Carlos Slim Helu

This guy is RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD! He has more money than Bill Gates. His name is Carlos Slim Helu.

You guys having fun? Let's try Korea...

Slide 10 – Kim Yuna

I imagine you guys recognize her. She is the world champion at figure skating: 김유나 (Kim Yuna).

Slide 11 – Psy

How about this guy? Just one song and he brought the world's attention to Korea. His name is 박재상 (Park Jae Sang), but you all know him by his stage name: Psy.

If Psy and Kim Yuna were to walk in this room most of you would probably recognize them. But how about this next guy?

Slide 12 – Lee Keon Hee

This guy is the richest and, arguably, most powerful man of South Korea: 이건희 (Lee Keon Hee). He owns Samsung, a company that is worldwide. People all around the globe are using Samsung products, but almost no one outside of Korea would ever recognize this man. But when we went to poorest areas of Cambodia this past year ALL of the children knew Gangnam Style and knew who Psy was. This is the power of the arts.

Joe Biden is the Vice President of the United States, arguably the second most powerful man in the world. Carlos Slim Helu is the richest man in the world. Lee Kun Hee is the richest man in Korea. They have the power to shift governments and affect the way most people live. But would most Americans, Koreans, or other people of the world recognize them? Likely not.

Anne Hathaway is still a young, up and coming actress. Kobe Bryant is a basketball player. Psy is a singer. Yet these three people would be far more well-known in the world than those other three powerful and rich men. Who are more powerful? Carlos Slim Helu and Lee Keon Hee. Who are more famous? Kobe Bryant and Psy.

Your entertainment is usually what you spend your spare money and your spare time on. You deem movies, music, books, musicals, and TV's, all as worthy of your time and your money. Why do you spend so much money on these things? Because they entertain you. I don't think many of you have a problem with movie director Steven Spielberg making \$100 million dollars a year, pro golfer Tiger Woods making \$78 million a year, or Iron Man actor Robert Downey Jr. making \$75 million a year. Do any of these men really make the world a better place? That is arguable, but what is clear is that they all definitely entertain different people. You might not like golf or movies, but your money and your time are clearly going somewhere, and during your leisure time I can almost guarantee it is going to arts and entertainment. This is why Psy is more famous than the chairman of Samsung. This is why more people would be excited to meet Michael Jordan than former President George Bush. Most people look forward to their entertainment more than their work. Many people work so that they can have money to use to entertain themselves. Entertainment is powerful!

Now what about God's entertainment? What entertains God? Entertainment is so important to you guys that you're looking at your smartphone a million times a day to look for or watch something interesting. But what interests God?

Our entertainment is watching stories of people living exciting lives, listening to songs about love between people, and looking at pictures and art depicting the world around us and the emotions we feel. **God's entertainment is watching people living lives walking with Him, singing about love to Him, seeing pictures and art depicting the emotions we feel in our relationship with Him.** Quite simply, **God's entertainment is our worship to Him.**

Slide 14 (slide 13 was blank) – God's entertainment is our worship to him

If we recognize and honor entertainers so much for what they do and hold them in such high regard, then how much more does God honor those who entertain Him and pull at His own heart? Most of you didn't recognize Carlos Slim Helu or Lee Keon Hee, but you recognized Kobe Bryant and Psy.

With that said, who do you think is the most recognized in heaven? Who do you think is the most famous there?

You think Rick Warren is famous in heaven? How about Joel Osteen? Or how about Reverend Cho from South Korea who made the biggest church in the world in a country not known to be Christian? These are some of the most powerful Christian men in the world today and most of you would recognize their pictures, but do you think they are famous in heaven?

I imagine during Jesus' time on earth most people viewed his twelve disciples as the most powerful, influential, and famous after Jesus. The disciples themselves argued over who was the greatest among them. But I want to show you who truly won Jesus' heart. Open your Bibles to Matthew 26...

Slides 16 – 19

Matthew 26:6-13 – Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, **“Why this waste?** For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, **“Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me.** For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

This story is mentioned in all four Gospel accounts. In the Gospel of Luke she is described as a “sinful woman.” It’s in the book of John that her name is given away: Mary Magdalene. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each chose to not share her name, but her story was clearly important enough to be in each of their accounts of Jesus. Perhaps they couldn’t shake the words of Jesus, “She has done a beautiful thing to me.” Jesus rarely spoke in that way. Mary had made an impact so strongly that Jesus prophesied her act of worship would never be forgotten. In fact, after Jesus resurrected He chose to not reveal Himself to the most powerful or important people in the sight of those around Him. Instead He chose to reveal Himself first to Mary Magdalene. **She was the one He wanted to see first.**

When people talk about the most famous Christians ever, the names Apostle Paul, Apostle Peter, and Martin Luther would likely be shared right away. I doubt many would think to name Mary Magdalene, but Jesus chose her before Paul or Peter or anyone else.

Most people would think God is most pleased with Rick Warren or Billy Graham, but little do they know God’s eyes are on the girl dancing for Him, the boy writing songs to Him, and the others offering their humble worship.

We give our money and our time to entertainment. Mary Magdalene gave her most expensive item to Jesus in worship. Worshipping Jesus was the most important thing to her.

The Religious Spirit

What’s interesting is that in three of the four Gospel accounts those who were with Jesus were said to be upset with the price of the ointment. They argued that it shouldn’t have been

“wasted” on Jesus and should have been given to the poor. “What a waste” they all said. And Jesus rebuked them all.

I want to emphasize this point: **the religious spirit will always say lavish worship is a waste.** Such worship as Mary’s would still be labeled today as excessive and foolish. “That money could have supported missionaries. It could have been given to the orphans. God knows you love Him, so why do you need to be so dramatic in your worship and waste such a valuable ointment? You make me uncomfortable. Your worship is excessive.”

Did you know that in Communist countries the arts were outlawed and everything was drab and without life? Color was removed from society. Just look at pictures of Pyongyang and you will see a country of almost all the same gray color.

In Communist countries those with creative gifts could only use their music, their writing, their sculptures, and their art on behalf of the government for propaganda purposes. Even now, jazz is illegal in North Korea. A famous pianist from North Korea who later escaped the country claimed that he was arrested after being caught playing a French love song. The restrictions of the communist North Korea suffocated his joy in his piano playing so much that he risked his life to escape so that he could play freely.

Sadly, the church today is very communistic in regards to the arts. People today spend millions and millions on singers and sports players and entertainers and we deem that as justifiable. We’re okay with that because we are entertained by them. **But we spend almost nothing on creative worship to God. We view entertainment to God as less than secondary.** Many Christians even feel uncomfortable at the thought of spending extra money on things like a dance team or opening a prophetic arts section in the church. “**What a waste!**” is what many Christians would say to such things.

Many Christians think that maybe revival will come if we spend extra money on this big time guest preacher, or if we do great outreaches to the lost, or if we give huge offerings to the poor. Sadly they don’t read their Bible to see where they should be putting their money for true revival to come.

All the greatest giving in the Bible was for the house of prayer, also known as the tabernacle and later as the temple. Jesus Himself said “My house will be called a house of prayer.” God’s entertainment is worship. The house of prayer is His epicenter of worship. If you go to almost any household in the world today you will find their furniture faces a specific object in the house... the TV. This is because we love our entertainment and the TV can be very entertaining. So much more does God set His chair before the house of prayer to delight in His people and their worship to Him.

In Exodus when the tabernacle was made the Israelites gave generously gold, silver, and all sorts of other precious gifts. When the tabernacle was completed, God’s fire fell from heaven on their offering.

In 2Chronicles Solomon overlaid the temple with gold, silver, and bronze. He spared no expense on making the temple a beautiful place for worship and prayer to God. God responded to his work by filling the temple with a cloud of his glory and later sending his fire from heaven on their offerings.

Hezekiah, Sheshbazzar, and Ezra are just a few others who received huge offerings from the people and from kings to rebuild the temple and each time there was great revival and powerful worship.

Why was the temple so important to God? It was His place of greatest worship and greatest entertainment. It wasn't just a building where they sacrificed animals for Him. Singers and musicians were to be stationed there day and night worshipping Him. In 1Chronicles 23 we read that King David stationed 4,000 such Levites to worship the Lord through their singing and their instruments, day and night. 4,000!

While the religious spirit yells that our money should go to the poor, God's priorities are actually very different.

In Deuteronomy 14 God instructs that the tithe of His people should go to the temple, also known as the house of prayer. It was then to go to the Levites, or the workers of God outside the house of prayer. Then last the money was for the poor.

Many Christians use Malachi 3 as a call to tithe. The truth is that Malachi 1 – 3 was specifically a rebuke against the priests and the Levites for their poor worship to God and not giving their best to the house of prayer. In Malachi 3 God calls all His people to bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in His house. What is the storehouse? Is it the poor? No, it is the temple, also known as the house of prayer for all nations. **God's worship is far more important than poor people getting money.** God's worship is far more important than the orphan or the widow. Deuteronomy 14 makes that clear.

1Chronicles 29 is about Israel and King David giving lavishly towards the building of the temple of God. They gave well over 375,000 pounds of gold for the temple. That is over 170,000kg of gold. Think about how many poor people they could have provided for? But that wasn't important compared to God's worship and His entertainment.

King David says this in 1Chronicles 29:3...

Slide 21 – 1Chronicles 29:3

1Chronicles 29:3 – Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver and because of my devotion to the house of God I give it to the house of my God.

David himself describes his offering to the temple as “treasure of my own.” That word for treasure is used only eight times in the Bible. Six of the times it was used when God was describing His people as His treasured possession. David gave from his best towards the house of prayer. He gave from his greatest treasures. The temple was magnificent! It was extravagant!

I have already mentioned how the religious spirit says that such lavish worship is a waste. The religious spirit will also try and say that we all sound the same before God and that He loves to be worshipped by us regardless if we sound good or not. While that might be true for those who do not possess the resources or the skills for good worship, it is completely untrue for those who do possess such things. God loves the heart of the poor, but those with resources have no excuse.

Why do you think churches like Hillsong and Lakewood are exploding? Their worship is extravagant. Both churches are like concert halls during worship. That makes religious people very uncomfortable. Religious people would rather it be much more plain and simple, with all the money saved given to the poor. Religious people would like to strip the temple of the 375,000 pounds of gold and make it a humble, wooden room. But God loves entertainment. He loves extravagant worship. God continues to bless Hillsong and Lakewood more and more.

Lakewood is the church that Joel Osteen preaches at and is the largest church in the United States. Did you know that while Joel Osteen preaches 30 minutes each week and he could be mistaken as seeker-friendly, they have an hour of worship each service? An hour of worship is not “seeker-friendly.” They get away with the worship because the level of the music and singing is truly concert level. People don’t want to leave concerts after four songs. And if we delight in huge concerts, how much more does God delight when tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of Christians gather to worship His name. With almost every large gathering of worship in the Bible God showed up either in fire, in glory, in joy, or in clear prophetic words.

God is very comfortable with such lavish worship. He is the same God who made the high priest’s garments some of the nicest, most expensive clothing of the time.

We love entertainment and we are made in God’s image. God loves entertainment too. God loves true worship. God loves it when we put our focus and our love and our devotion upon Him. He is the author and the perfecter of our faith. He is the Father to the fatherless and the defender of widows. He is the deliverer for the poor and the oppressed. Our worship to Him is first, and then as we get His heart we are able to go and shake the earth.

We need to understand how powerful the arts are to God. Worship is not just singing with music. Worship is whatever we do for the glory of God. Mary Magdalene poured out expensive ointment upon Jesus in beautiful worship. There are many instances in the Psalms of God’s people be called to dance before the Lord in worship. King David himself danced before the Lord with all his might. Miriam the sister of Moses led all the Israelite women in dancing after they crossed the Red Sea. Jesus Himself loved to tell stories and parables. Of course Jesus loves videos, dramas, pictures, books, and other things depicting His love and His worship. God loves the arts!

Support the Artists

God inspired me to preach this message while Sky and I were vacationing in Europe back in early June. While we were in Europe we saw street performers everywhere. These people, for the most part, were really good. A number of the musicians were so good that they had their own cds. As we kept passing musician after musician I felt God whispering to me, “Support the arts.” “Support the arts.” I then made a point to give to the musicians, particularly those who were clearly gifted and loving what they were doing. But I knew God wasn’t just telling me to give to street musicians, I could feel God had a message for those involved in the arts.

I was encouraged by those street musicians. They clearly loved their craft. The talented ones with their own cds were clearly not just doing it for a few bucks. Every musician, every artist has to practice what they do to get good at it. These talented ones were choosing to practice

before everyone. **They were choosing to share their gift at every opportunity, without fear of rejection.**

Watching them made me think of all my friends who are on praise teams, dance teams, drama teams, media teams, who are artists or writers. My heart just went out to them. The church rarely supports such groups.

Artists tend to be taken advantage of. Because they are skilled at singing or photography or design or dancing, they are often asked to perform or serve for free. People think, "After all, this is what you're good at and enjoy, so please serve me and entertain me." There is usually little thanks or honor for what they do. Secular artists in all fields: acting, music, and media, are all paid handsomely. But in the church everything is expected to be done for free. God called for the tithes to go first to the house of prayer and to his worship, but often the poorest people in ministry are those who serve in the house of prayer.

Artists aren't just in need of money though. Far more than money they need time to hone their craft and encouragement to keep going. Artists must practice and **have the support to practice to succeed.** I've found artists, whether they be in media or in music or in design and the arts, they all need a place where they feel safe and accepted to practice and try new things. The religious spirit is communistic and wants everyone to be in the same cookie cutter form. The religious spirit suffocates the arts. Artists must be allowed to be free. Artists must be encouraged to pursue this freedom, to be unique, and to worship God in their own way. **Little practice time, little support, and little freedom don't make for pleasing entertainment to God.** The religious spirit may see something new and different and say, "What a waste!" But Jesus and all of heaven are watching and are approving. David's brothers didn't approve of him, but God saw David's heart and delighted in him.

We often think that those who are the most visible and who lead the most people are the most famous in heaven. But in the book of faith we read about Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham led no one but their families. They simply walked with God and offered worship to him. And they are the ones who are famous in heaven. Their lives were true entertainment to the Lord. He delighted in them.

Many of you think you have little to offer. You think all you have to offer to God is a few pennies compared to the riches of those more talented or more successful around you. But Jesus is watching. He is watching your heart and He is delighting in you. The poor widow with the few pennies was far more famous in heaven than all the rich people around her. Don't ever despise what you have to offer. You're far more famous than you think.

Invite up a keyboardist

Altar Call

Dancers, artists, and those who struggle seeing your craft as worship to the Lord... come lay down your craft before the Lord and give Him an undivided heart

Mary Magdalene seemed to just be a follower, a sinful woman, no one of that much of importance... but Jesus chose to reveal Himself to her before anyone else!

K1 prayer tab and praise team and prayer leaders stand... let His glory fill you!

You think that you're alone or that it's for nothing, but God is watching. No one on earth was approving of Mary Magdalene, but she was famous in heaven.

2Chronicles 5:10-14 – And when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves, without regard to their divisions, and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters; and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord), and when the song was raised with trumpets and cymbals and other instruments, in praise to the Lord, “For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever,” the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.