

Key Insights for Christian Discipleship @ Jazz Evensong

Week 4 Sept 27, 2017 *This Is Serious Stuff!*

Genesis 12:3b *... in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

Christian discipleship,
the discipline of following in the ways of Jesus,
is a grateful response to the grace of God's forgiving acceptance.

This idea of grateful response for God's grace
is a bit like the lines on blank sheet for composing music.
There's a structure – 2 sets of five lines with treble and bass clefs.
There are conventional ways of using that structure.
There are creative ways of building on those conventions.
There are ways of breaking the conventions apart with something new.
But it all gets written on those 10 lines.

In jazz, there's an additional dynamic.
Not a lot of notes that get written on those 10 lines.
It's just some key notes and chords,
a melody line, some harmony suggestions, and a rhythm.
But as the conversation among the musicians and their instruments unfolds,
new possibilities emerge, are tried, are refined, and eventually take a more lasting shape.
I've noticed a lot of musicians compose with a pencil, so they can easily refine by revising.
But they are writing on solid, printed lines that don't change.

It's those solid, printed lines of grace that I think God is laying down
in the story of the covenant with Abraham and Sarah.
Maybe, just imagining, maybe those 10 lines are the 10 Permissions.
That's what Richard Topping, Principal of VST, calls the 10 Commandments.
God invites and enables us, as heirs of this covenant with Abraham and Sarah,
to compose our lives on these 10 lines of possibilities.
In doing the composing, God promises to be with us,
inspiring, guiding, suggesting, correcting.
But we, in our freedom, have to do the composing and the performing.
That's the glory, and the agony, of human authenticity.

The compositions we are invited to write on these lines of grace
are to be a blessing to the whole earth,
energized vibes of justice, peace, and joy.
That's the key insight here.
What we do with the abilities that God has given to us,
these gifts of God's grace,
are to be used in gratitude for the blessing of all the earth.

These analogies with jazz composing and performing
might be a bit of a stretch,
but maybe, just maybe, a stretch worth playing with.