

Today's Devotional is provided by Rose Herring

Hearing About Jesus

Sunday morning radio in Philadelphia in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s featured Mary Mason on WHAT and Louise Williams on WDAS. It was a sure bet almost every radio in the African American neighborhoods was tuned to either A.M. station from dawn till noon, crackling out the tunes of worship and the latest news and religious happenings that were of interest to the Black community.

As coffee brewed in old-fashioned percolator pots, over-easy eggs simmered in iron frying pans and slices of white bread sat toasting under the gas oven in bottom broilers. Rows of crisp bacon drained on paper towels, and hot combs rested on the stove's front burners, ready to touch up "them kitchens" as mothers hummed and swayed to the tunes and dads read the "Sunday Bulletin."

For years, the Gospel Queens kept on spinning their vinyl—with songs by the Five Blind Boys of Alabama, Rev. C.L. Franklin, Sam Cooke, Mahalia Jackson, and the Caravans, launching the careers of Inez Andrews, Shirley Caesar, Dorothy Norwood and James Cleveland. And let's not forget the Clark Sisters, who told us how "Jeezus brought the sunshine."

The broadcasting of Gospel music throughout the U.S. in the 1950s and



'60s heated up the air and the airwaves, and whole cities, as well as little country music towns hearing the Oak Ridge Boys, Hank Williams and Dolly Parton rocked with praise every Sunday morning.

Music, since the beginning of time, has been an integral, if not essential, part of the worship experience—from the beating of primitive drums to the Gregorian chants of the 6th Century, to the cantorial prayers and liturgical sounds of the early Jewish synagogues, to the chiming of church bells and Handel's Messiah in

1741. African Christians brought their beats and tunes with them into slavery, thus laying the foundation for Gospel music.

Sounds of worship have moved hand-in-hand with the spoken word, mixing and melding and forever tied and shaping each other.

Given how much Christian praise and worship is centered on Jesus, I find it odd that there's no biblical reference or direct link between Jesus and music. He does not play an instrument, nor direct someone to sing a hymn and then go pray, nor does Jesus even hum a tune as he walked the land.

Yet music, behind prayer, is the fundamental way in which many of us offer up our praises and petitions to God. Some of the first songs many of us learn as children are Jesus-centered—Jesus loves me, Jesus loves the little children, Jesus in the morning, Jesus in the noontime, Jesus when the sun goes down. At Easter, there are so many—“Now behold the Lamb”, the “Old Rugged Cross”, and “He Arose.” Also, “Jesus Christ is Risen Today”, “Jesus Paid It All” and “Were You There?” So many others remind us of his beauty, tenderness, faithfulness, love, life, birth and death on the cross.

For more than 2,000 years, tens of thousands of songs and millions of voices and instruments have celebrated, mourned, praised, worshipped and awaited the the return of our Savior.

Some of the final chapters of the Book of Psalms command us to “sing to the Lord a new song (and) make a joyful noise unto the Lord... Let the sea roar and all that is in it (and) let the floods clap their hands (and) the hills sing together” (Psalm 98). And let's not forget the last thing King David tells us in Psalm 150: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!”

When it came to music, and growing up “gospel,” the sounds of the church were one of the first things I turned to when afraid, lonely, confused, joyful or sad. I am still moved and comforted today by our own MCCDC music ministers Deidre and Daniel, the choir, Eclectic Praise, and Rev. Cathy's singing.

And despite all that's going on in our world today, I sing because I'm happy, lest the rocks cry out in my place!