

Last week the 8am service was Matins, with no sermon, so you may have missed that last week was the start of a parish-wide sermon series looking at the role of music in worship. The readings we've just heard are readings chosen to go with the sermon series.

So we have a bit of an anomaly: a parish-wide focus on music in worship, and a service where there is no music.

I don't know the history of why there is no music at this service, so I don't know whether this was a choice or something that happened by default. You might have different perspectives on that.

But the very fact that this is a service without music is at a very basic level a useful reminder that there are very different approaches which can all be perfectly valid expressions of worship. We can get so carried away by our own preferences that we forget that, and try to impose our own ideas on other people, or if we don't have the power to do that, at least treat other approaches with contempt.

With music, as with so much else about our faith and worship, what we do reflects what we believe and what we think we should be aiming at – and more to the point, what we think God wants us to be doing, how God wants us to be using the talents we have been given, how God wants us to grow and nurture growth in each other.

I remember reading years ago about the founding of the Jesuits in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. My memory is that the first Jesuits wanted to have no music in their worship, so they could concentrate on their mission. They wanted all their energies to be directed to that. They wrote this into the first draft of their Constitutions, but the authorities in Rome objected and refused to approve the Constitutions until music was reinstated. Even so, the Jesuits kept their music to a minimum, in contrast to the florid liturgical music popular at the time.

So, reflecting on that story, perhaps what this parish-wide emphasis on music in worship can most of all do for us at this service is encourage us to think about the purpose of our worship together and what part that plays in how we live our faith. As our gospel reminded us, we are all given different talents, different roles to play. And we are expected to use those talents, whatever they are, and live our lives faithful to who we are, by God's grace. Even the most powerless can do that. God offers us all sorts of support to help us in this, and the opportunity to come together to share in worship is one of them, as it connects us more deeply with God and each other. If we lose that connection, we have lost a deep source of strength and refreshment in our lives. We need to seek God's guidance to show us how we can best keep that connection live for ourselves and our fellow worshippers.