

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Miranda Andersen

2 Oct 2009

Music has always been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. As the daughter of two musicians, it was only inevitable that music would become such an influential part of my life. While I am not a music major here, I have found ways to stay involved whether it be through band, singing at Gloria Dei or now with chapel musicians.

I came into Augustana four years ago a little naïve. I came in knowing that I would be a religion major, but I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I was challenged. In high school, you're taught there's always a right answer. In college, and especially in the religion department, you find out more often than not, there are no right answers, just right questions. This frustrated me at first, but I soon began to thrive on the idea of asking questions.

It was only natural for me to bring music into the equation. Even when I was younger, music was what connected me to worship. I was a fairly attentive child, but there were times I lost concentration during worship. But I was always excited to participate in the hymns. Singing made me feel like I was contributing to the worship service. Here I was, elementary-aged and singing with every other member of the congregation. The rest of the service generally just floated on by, including the ten, even fifteen-minute prayers of the day that I never timed.

Music has often served as a bridge for my understanding, and this has remained true for my time here at Augie. My freshman year in honors religion, we read a book by Arthur Peacocke that greatly influenced how I approach theology. Using music as a metaphor, I began to explore seeing God as a jazz composer and creation as the chords to a jazz piece. This opened my eyes to a completely different theology that I had never been exposed to before college.

So it shouldn't be too surprising that my inspiration for my senior sermon didn't come from a biblical text, but from a song. It's entitled "Tidal Wave," a song performed by the band Owl City. I'll repeat the lyrics:

*I forgot the last time I felt brave, I just recall insecurity
'Cause it came down like a tidal wave and sorrow swept over me
Then I was given grace and love, I was blind but now I see
'Cause I've found a new hope from above and courage swept over me.*

The lyrics, even after an initial listening, struck me. It's hard to put to words what it was that drew me to this stanza, but it continued to stick with me long after the final notes of the song faded. While I was desperately trying to figure out what I was going to do for this sermon, those lyrics persistently came back to mind and wouldn't leave. So I decided not to let them and they became my inspiration, leading me to the texts that I chose for today.

Ironically, both texts from Psalms and Romans are lectionary texts for the same Sunday taken from year A. What were the chances of finding a text that matched up to the lyrics of my new favorite song and for it to be paired with a Psalm that speaks of singing praises to our God? It was almost too good to be true.

For those of you who know me, and especially those of you who heard me preach the first Sunday of this year know that I have a passion for ideas that are in tension and cannot and should not be resolved. Ideas like hope and suffering, sinner and saint, all about you not about you and so on and so forth. I thrive on working with these tensions, something that I did not enjoy until I came to Augustana.

The Romans text is a classic Lutheran text. The chapter begins with the declaration that is central to Lutheran doctrine: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” Our justification comes through faith and faith alone, not some other means.

Paul continues by stating “...not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings...” While we have hope and peace and are justified, we still experience suffering. Christianity is not all happy-go-lucky, and things don’t become easy. We still fail, we still fall, we still suffer. And yet there is still hope.

But Paul doesn’t even stop there. He then talks about Christ’s sacrifice for us: “For while we were still weak, at the *right time* Christ died for the ungodly...God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” We are the ungodly. Jesus’ love, God’s love for us occurs when we were and are at our lowest. Before Jesus’ death there was sin, during his death there was sin and after his death there was sin. But that doesn’t change what his death

meant and still means today. We receive grace even though we don't deserve it. Jesus died for us not for us to change, but so that we are freed to be human.

It is difficult to admit or accept that we are sinners and still receive grace. We can't resolve the two notions and must allow them to remain in tension. Accepting that we are sinners, we must also accept that we are forgiven. We must hold together what is opposite without compromising.

Music in many ways is relatable to this aspect of theology. Within any piece of music, there is a source of tension whether it be the entire piece or only a small section. As a participant, when you are listening to that part of the music you want to squirm. It's uncomfortable and not pleasing to the ear, and you want some kind of resolution. As humans, we are bound by sin, an uncomfortable and undesirable state of our lives. In both cases, this tension is unavoidable.

In music, what would the resolution be at the end of the piece without deviation and having a place to return? It would be stagnant and there would be no movement or excitement. In our faith lives, sin brings us away from God but it is through Jesus' death and ultimate resurrection that brings us back to God. By this I don't mean to say that we are ever completely separated from God because God is always with us, always present. But it is our obsession with sin and our unwillingness to accept that we are forgiven, the thought that we need to do something to deserve it, that distracts us from God's unconditional grace.

In our lives, is there ever a true resolution? Since we are sinners, is there ever a time where we can be truly resolved? We have been forgiven, but we still sin. Within our faith lives there are many mini-tensions and mini-resolutions, all

leading up to the big finale—our own resurrection and being reunited with God.

The final resolution, the ultimate coming home.

The lyrics from “Tidal Wave” really spoke to me because they seem to be addressing this tension. We know that we do not deserve it, but grace and love is given to us. We have messed up, there seems to be no hope, but through Jesus’ death, our eyes have been opened. There is tension there, but it is a natural tension that must be embraced. Jesus has given us permission to be human, giving us a new hope and courage to continue to live our lives, praising and worshiping our God. Amen.

MORNING WORSHIP

October 2, 2009

PRELUDE “Prelude on the Theme of ‘Jupiter’ “ Arr. Kevin Mayhew

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

INVOCATION

OPENING PRAYER

The Prayer of St. Francis

L: Let us pray,

C: **Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;**

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood, as to understand;

to be loved, as to love;

for it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen

READING/SCRIPTURE

Psalms 95:1-7

I forget the last time I felt brave

I just recall insecurity

Cause it came down like a tidal wave

and sorrow swept over me

Then I was given grace and love

I was blind but now I can see

Cause I've found a new hope from above

and courage swept over me

- from “Tidal Wave” by Owl City

Romans 5:1-11

MESSAGE

Miranda Andersen, '10

Hometown: Worthing, MN

Major: Religion

HYMN

“Chief of Sinners Though I Be”

ELW #609

PRAYERS/LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION

THANKS to everyone who helped today: Ellie, Beth, Dan and a special thanks to my mommy for helping with the music. Also a big thanks to everyone who came to worship. - Miranda

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

CAMPUS-WIDE BIBLE STUDY - held in the Canton Room at 6 pm on Monday nights.

BANQUET SERVING - The Chapel is serving at the downtown soup kitchen, called the Banquet, on **Monday Oct. 5th**. We need about 38 workers for two different shifts: 6-8 people at 2:00 for food prep, and 25-30 workers to serve the food at 5:15. We are usually cleaned up and back on campus by about 9 pm. There will be a sign-up sheet on the Narthex table in the Chapel.

BREAD FOR THE WORLD SPEAKER - On **Monday, October 5th at 7 pm, in the Commons Lounge**, Art Simon, founder and president emeritus of Bread for the World, will share the surprising story of how God uses ordinary people to make an extraordinary difference in the lives of hungry people. For more information: www.bread.org/artsimon

CLEAN WATER PROJECT - *For All Who Are Thirsty:* Let's work together to eliminate dirty water! USF, Sioux Falls Seminary, and Augustana are partnering to bring clean water to people who need it - here and abroad. If you're interested in helping, **sign up in the narthex or email** Hannah Miller at hmmiller08@ole.augie.edu or Kayla Rockwell at kerockwell07@ole.augie.edu

This week in chapel:

- Sunday (4th) Worship, 11 am - Ann Pederson
- Monday (5th) Worship, 10 am - David Maus, Bread for the World
- Serve the Banquet (downtown soup kitchen)
- Art Simon, Bread for the World, speaks in the Commons Lounge at 7:00 pm
- Wednesday (7th) Holy Communion, 10 am - Dave O'Hara, Reli.;
- ASA Inauguration
- Friday (9th) Worship, 10 am - Rob Oliver, 40th yr .memorial for 1969 Debate Team who perished in a plane crash