

CFAMC DEVOTIONAL PAGE
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Simon Peter said... "I am going fishing." [the other disciples] said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

--John 21:3-6

To a composer, "fish" are ideas, commissions and performances. It probably is safe to say that most composers go through periods where these fish are just as elusive as the ones Peter and the Disciples were trying to catch. I certainly have! The question, of course, is how do we follow Jesus' instructions to fish "on the right side of the boat?" I would suggest that there are at least two scriptures that provide clues. First, let us fish for the inspiration to write beautiful music which performers will want to present to an appreciative audience. Let us revisit a verse we read last month:

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

--Psalm 92:1-5

We should notice that the first verse of this Psalm tells us to do two things, in a specific order: "give thanks unto the Lord," *then* "sing praises unto (His) name." Before we start singing, playing an instrument of ten strings (or valves, reeds, etc.), or composing, our hearts must be thankful.

This is emphasized in verses 4 and 5: "I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are *thy* works! And *Thy* thoughts are very deep" (italics ours). Let's be honest: as composers (and other creative people), we sometimes get so concerned about *our* works, *our* thoughts (deep or shallow), that we forget to do two things that are crucial to fishing on the right side of the boat: to revel in God's works and thoughts, and to give thanks for the works and thoughts He has created through us.

How do we fish—"on the right side"—for commissions and performances? Returning to John 21, one might suggest that the answer comes in Jesus' instructions to Peter in verse 15: "feed my lambs." This does not necessarily mean writing worship or religious-themed music (at the exclusion of all else); a secular composition that comes from a Godly place can nourish the spirit as well. But if we use our musical talents to share God's word with an audience, perhaps in a worship setting, that can anchor us to a community (another concept about which composers—whose profession often is solitary--sometimes forget):

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

--Hebrews 10:24-25

This passage nicely links to Psalm 92. If we triumph in the works of God's hands, then we can use *our* works to "stir up one another to love and good works." As Christian composers, we begin to fish on the right side of the boat when our creations give thanks for our Creator's works, and when we use our musical fish to feed Jesus' lambs.

Also, that is how you "hook" an audience at a cod-cert: you nourish their sole—er, soul.