

The February/March CFAMC Devotional Page

All manner of competing ideas have been swirling through my head about the Page... but it all came together with my indignant mental question with today's politics: "What in the world is a SEQUESTER, anyway?"



Leaving aside all the politics, the answer to the question finally unified several trains of thought that I am going to try (Lord, help me) to pull into one Page...

To sequester, in the sense that the U.S. Government is using the term, means to set resources – in this case, money – aside from the general budget, making them unavailable for spending. Three distinct ideas come to mind out of this. The first comes from my second indignant question: "What is all that money being sequestered FOR?" I can't answer that for the U.S. Government... but I do know what God has set us aside for.

Psalm 4:3 – But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto Him.

I Peter 1:15-16 – ¹⁵ But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Normally when we try to answer questions like that, we think of what God wants us to *do*, but that's the end of the process: God has "sequestered" us, in Christ, to be *with* Him and *like* Him (which handily would take care of our activities, wouldn't it?). What an incredible privilege and blessing (I just have to stop and say, "Thank You, Lord!" right here), even before we consider the perks...

Ephesians 1:3 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

I Corinthians 2:9-12 – ⁹ But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. ¹⁰ But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the

Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Now consider that... God has “sequestered” us to be with Him, like Him, and for Him to use and bless beyond measure. That is much, much better than anything going on in Washington D.C.

But then again, there is another side to this thing...and, as always, it is on our side that sequestration gets messed up. Since God has selected us to be with Him, like Him, and for Him, that should mean that every area of our life and work ought to reflect His presence. But do you ever notice how we set up messy little “sequesters” of our own to keep that from happening? Human nature is a terrible thing, my friends...

I was recently talking with a choir director friend of mine who made the remark that some of the church members he works with think the choir exists to do the Gospel Top 20... That led to a long, late-night discussion that left deep tracks on my mind. He and I both span the African American, European Classical, and hymn traditions and are well-versed in them all, so this was not a discussion about styles as much as it was about the relatively limited scope of *content*. We want music in church that will pump us up and comfort us, give us some kind of emotional release, and make us – as I have heard said many times, “feel just a little better than [we] did when [we] came in here.” All that is well and good...but is that really all there is, all God meant there to be in terms of His music?

The “sequestration” of church music...as Christian composers I need us to think about this. I know a number of us are doing well in breaking the “four-hours-on-Sunday-morning only” sequestration of Christian music, so I encourage all of us to keep up the good work on that. But let’s consider Sunday morning for a moment. Where are the songs that both comfort the grieving soul but also challenge that same soul to look to God as the only Source of strength, and to continue to rejoice in the Lord – to continue to obey God’s command to rejoice? Where are the songs that challenge the unsaved – or the complacent? Where are the songs that bring us face to face with God in His fullness – the true worship songs, regardless of style? I am not saying these songs do not exist; I’m just asking: how frequent are they in YOUR church’s rotation?

As Christian musicians, we are not called to merely make people feel a little better than when they heard our piece; God means more for the gifts He has given us. We were given our gifts to communicate the fullness of what God has called us for...to touch the hearts of His people with Who He is, and the fact that we are in Him, with Him, to be like Him, and to be blessed and used by Him, in every area of our lives. That is a great charge, a great blessing...we must handle it with care!

And, people are desperate to encounter people who are not “sequestered” in what they allow God to do with them and their gifts. This very evening, my 16-year-old student asked me one of the most difficult questions I have ever faced, in the middle of an assignment from her school about the ways people’s views of God change from their childhood as they face great suffering: “How have YOUR views of God changed, Deeann, since you were a child?” I opened up my heart to her, and just told the story in as much detail as time and propriety allowed. At the end, I said that there is nothing in my life that is off-limits if God wants to use the story of my life to minister to

His people. Who knows what this young woman may ask in the future? But there are no Christians in her immediate family beside her: if she can't ask these questions of me and get a Godly answer, then she won't be able to get those answers from a (relatively) mature Christian woman whom she knows and trusts. And so...there can be no "sequester" between me and her if she is to develop as a Christian woman who is more than a "Sunday-morning-only" church person.

Which brings me to the last thought: God, Who is holy, set apart from sinners, did not at the critical time "sequester" himself from us; He sent His Son, and then gave His Holy Spirit to be constantly with us. If He was that open to us and by that made it possible for us to be in Him, with Him, and to be like Him, what consequences does that have for our lives and the music that God brings out of our lives? I pray that in this year we will consider this as never before – for such a time as this!

Romans 12:1-2 – ¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.