

THIS IS MY STORY, THESE ARE MY SONGS

1 CHRONICLES 16:37-42 + 25:1-6 FEBRUARY 14, 2018

We are going to be doing a series of studies looking at a little trio of Psalms here on Wednesday nights. You probably know that the Psalms aren't just a random pile of songs. They were meticulously arranged into 5 books. Most of the time your Bible will show Book 1, Book 2, and so on. But then there are also different *types* of Psalms. There are thanksgiving Psalms and lament Psalms. Imprecatory Psalms and Royal Psalms, just to name a few. And then there are Psalms that are grouped or connected in special ways. There are the 15 Songs of Ascent, for example. "The Lord reigns" songs starting at Psalm 93.

But did you know there are 3 Psalms that are not only given to everyone, they were given to *someone*. Someone specific. There is only 1 case of a particular individual being addressed in the title of the Psalms, and his name is Jeduthun. Lots of Psalms have information given in the superscript: A Psalm of David, or A Prayer of the Afflicted. Sometimes we're given biographical information: "A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him." Sometimes there is musical instruction: A Michtam of David, Set To "Do Not Destroy."

But then you get to Psalms 39, 62 and 77. And here's what their titles are: To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun.

The first two were written by King David. The third was written by Asaph. No one else has a Psalm specifically addressed to them in the Psalter. While there is some debate as to whether 62 and 77 are addressed to him personally or if his name is used as a type of descriptor, Psalm 39 is definitely addressed and delivered to him.

So, who was Jeduthun and what might we learn from these special songs that were sent his way? That's what we want to begin with tonight. So, to embark on our study of Psalm 39, 62 and 77, we'll have to start at First Chronicles 16. That way we can learn what sort of man he was and then see what sort of songs he was given.

There are 5 passages in First Chronicles that give us some insight into Jeduthun's life. And in each one we can highlight certain aspects of his calling as a worshiper of God and a servant in David's court.

Our first stop is in First Chronicles, chapter 16, beginning in verse 37.

1 Chronicles 16:37-42 - ³⁷ So he (David) left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister before the ark regularly, as every day's work required; ³⁸ and Obed-Edom with his sixty-eight brethren, including Obed-Edom the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, *to be* gatekeepers; ³⁹ and Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the Lord at the high place that was at Gibeon, ⁴⁰ to offer burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, and *to do* according to all that is written in the Law of the Lord which He commanded Israel; ⁴¹ and with them Heman and Jeduthun and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because His mercy *endures* forever; ⁴² and with them Heman and Jeduthun, to sound aloud with trumpets and cymbals and the musical instruments of God. Now the sons of Jeduthun *were* gatekeepers.

So, we're given a lot of information here. For our purposes tonight, we want to focus on aspects of his life that might supply application for us.

In *these* verses I have 4 highlights for us. First, Jeduthun was **personally called**. Notice there in verse 41. He was "designated by name." Though our God is accomplishing an immense, global work across every generation, He doesn't see you as just some cog in a vast machine. His work is done through specific individuals who He has *personally* set apart for various tasks. When we look in the Book of Acts, we don't see parts or positions being filled generically. It was *these 7* men chosen to be deacons. It was *Paul* chosen to preach to the Gentiles. It was *Philip* sent to speak to the Ethiopian. And Paul explains in Romans 12 that we as Christians, though many in the Church, are still *individually* given a measure of faith and specific gifts for specific opportunities. You are **personally called** for some area of service to God.

Second highlight in this passage: Jeduthun was to **praise the Lord**. He was a Levite, but his specific ministry would be to lead worship and to train *others* to lead worship. We're told that the overall character of his ministry would be to give thanks to the Lord because of His mercy. In fact, Bible scholars will tell us that his name means something like, "celebrating" or "one who gives praise".

Third highlight in these verses: Jeduthun was to **play instruments** in his service. Why should this stand out? Well, I find it a great encouragement that we can use our natural skills and abilities in the service of our heavenly Father. Jeduthun's ability to play instruments were directly used in spiritual work. It wasn't a *supernatural* ability, it was a *natural* skill that he had developed in his life. But once he turned it over to the Lord, God took something natural and transformed it into something eternal. God is the only one who has figured out alchemy: He takes our clay and turns it into gold.

Eric Liddell was a wonderful servant of God. Part of his story was immortalized in the 1981 classic *Chariots Of Fire*. Most of us don't know that he served as a missionary in China for 20 years and that he died in a Japanese internment camp in 1945. What we remember is how the world's attention was turned toward Christ because Eric Liddell could *run*. He famously said: "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast! And when I run I feel His pleasure." God can convert our natural abilities into eternal accomplishments. If you play an instrument, play it for Jesus. If you are swift of foot, run for His pleasure. If you can build or repair or code or communicate, offer those abilities for His service. God can use *all* of those things, natural though they may be, for His glory.

Fourth highlight from this first passage: Jeduthun was **pleased with God's will**. If you're familiar with 1 Chronicles 16, you know that it was a very significant moment in the history of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant had been recovered. David was bringing it back to be in the midst of God's people. But David made a special plan: He set up a *separate* tabernacle for the Ark. A place of praise and prayer. It would later be known as "The Tabernacle of David." It would've been a very exciting, *new* thing. But, did you notice? Jeduthun wasn't assigned to *that* Tabernacle. His orders were to go back to the Mosaic Tabernacle at Gibeon and be stationed there. Not at the cool new place, but the old one. But Jeduthun did not complain that Asaph, rather than he, was given the exciting new post. No, he was faithful to go where his king wanted him and he did not resent the fact that someone *else* got a different opportunity.

Let's move to our next passage that tells us about Jeduthun. Turn to First Chronicles, chapter 25, verse 1.

1 Chronicles 25:1a - Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who *should prophesy* with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals.

The highlight from this verse is that Jeduthun was to **prophecy for the Lord**. Through his music ministry, he would act as a seer for the king. Now, this stands in contrast with the previous passage. Because, previously we saw that Jeduthun would use his *natural* skills and abilities to serve God and that it would be fruitful. But here we see that he was *also* given *supernatural* filling to accomplish ministry. He would be empowered by God to do what he could never do on his own. And that's what spiritual gifts are for us. First Corinthians 12 says there are diversities of gifts given for diversities of ministries and activities as God works all in all. And the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given to each of God's people for the profit of all. So, we learn from the New Testament and see in examples like Jeduthun that the life of a believer is characterized by supernatural empowering to accomplish God's will as we carry out our regular lives in His service. *What* God asks us to do and *how* He gifts us to do it is *His* business, but as we present ourselves and our abilities as living sacrifices, His method is to accomplish His work in and through us in magnificent ways.

Our next passage is First Chronicles 9, verse 33.

1 Chronicles 9:33 - ³³These are the singers, heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites, who lodged in the chambers, and were free from other duties; for they were employed in that work day and night.

While Jeduthun is not specifically mentioned, this regulation would've applied to him. Here the highlight is that Jeduthun lived **in the presence of God**. He may not have been king, but he was living the life that King David wanted. David wrote in Psalm 27: "One *thing* I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life!" There it's demonstrated that a life lived in the presence of God is the most enviable life of all. Now, most of us here do not get to work at a church or go to a worship service every day. But, *all* of us have been invited into intimate fellowship with God. We're given access to His ear. We're able to praise Him at any time. We're told to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit and to *walk* with God, in His presence.

Turn with me to First Chronicles chapter 25.

1 Chronicles 25:3, 8 - ³Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp to give thanks and to praise the Lord...⁸And they cast lots for their duty, the small as well as the great, the teacher with the student.

Two highlights here. First, we see that Jeduthun **prepared the next generation**. A big part of his life was dedicated to directing his sons in how to serve God. For him that meant not only training them in religious things, but also training them in music. Commentators think he led a choir and/or an orchestra. His service to the king wasn't just about him. In fact, it was probably *mostly* about these other guys, as far as time spent. And that leads to the second highlight in these verses: Jeduthun **permitted others to serve**. He did not try to stand in the way of these less experienced men. All were able to serve the Lord - the small as well as the great, the teacher *with* the student. His daily life was about *graciously* teaching others how to serve God and then watching God do really great things through their lives. He wasn't a diva. He didn't have a God complex. He had the heart of a

teacher. And, it worked! We see his sons still doing Godly service hundreds of years later, first under Hezekiah, then under Josiah and even after the Babylonian captivity under Nehemiah. Jeduthun's legacy of teaching the next generation really worked.

One more passage.

1 Chronicles 25:6 - ⁶All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the authority of the king.

The highlight here is that Jeduthun **presented himself to the king** in loyalty and submission. He didn't answer to anyone else. Paul tells us in Romans that, as servants, it is to our *own* Master that we stand or fall. That shouldn't make us afraid, because God is able to make us stand, but it is a wonderful reminder that no one can separate us from Christ. And each of us *will* stand before our King one day and give an account of how we spent our lives. While we live on this side of eternity, we want to do so under the authority of Jesus and in His service, obeying the tasks He has assigned to us.

And that brings us to the 3 Psalms that bear Jeduthun's name. We've seen a little about him. A faithful man. A family man. A man full of thankful praise. A man with a gracious heart, ready and able to teach others about worship. If you were going to write a song with this guy in mind, what song would you write? Here's what Jeduthun got: Psalm 39 is a funeral Psalm about the vanity of life. Psalm 62 is about enduring the opposition and attacks of this life, which, but the way, is only a vapor. Psalm 77 talks about what we do when the day of trouble comes and our souls refuse to be comforted. They're a lot more like Adele's *Hello*, then they are like Pharrell's *Happy*!

Jeduthun, you can tell everybody that these are your songs! If I was Jeduthun, I might have said, "Hey, how about Psalm 150? How about Psalm 1?" I'm not sure how excited I would've been to receive Psalms 39, 62 and 77 designated with my name. For the king to say, "Here, these are for you, go master them and perform them."

At the end of Winston Churchill's time as Prime Minister, the House of Lords and House of Commons commissioned a full length portrait of him to be painted. They paid a pretty penny to Graham Sutherland, a modernist painter. "The painting was presented to Churchill by both Houses of Parliament at a public ceremony...on his 80th birthday." Churchill *hated* it! "The painting was intended to hang in the Houses of Parliament after Churchill's death, but it had been given to Churchill as a personal gift, [so] he took it [to his home] where it was never displayed" despite numerous requests. In fact, Lady Churchill had it *burned* shortly after they took the painting home.¹

We're told that the Lord gives us songs to sing. Job 35:10: God gives us songs in the night. Psalm 40:3: [The Lord] has put a new song in my mouth. In Revelation 14, the 144,000 are taught a special song only they can learn. God gives us songs and plays a melody through our lives. And, if we're honest, they're not always the upbeat, sunshine and lollipops songs we might choose for ourselves. They're often songs of suffering and endurance and waiting. But being a Christian means we must be willing to let them play in us. It means being like Jeduthun, who was *faithful* to carry out his calling, even when he had to sing tough songs. And because of that faithfulness, *when* the Temple was opened for the first time in 2nd Chronicles 5, when Jeduthun and his guys sang their song of praise, the glory of the Lord so filled the House that the priests couldn't continue the service.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutherland%27s_Portrait_of_Winston_Churchill

So, as we study through the 3 songs that bear his name - not *written* by him, but *given* to him to play - we'll learn about serving God, honoring God, worshipping God, even during the tough melodies of life. And through Jeduthun's example, we see that we can have a lasting, eternal legacy as we live for God, putting our efforts and talents and abilities in His service and allowing Him to direct us according to His will and fill us with His power. And as the Lord does that, you can tell everybody this is your story, these are your songs.