

## **Monday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 27, 2023**

Recommended reading: pp. 360-371, "Music" (part one)

In chapter 14, Wesley Morris traces the origin of protest music back to the songs of slaves. "Sometimes the songster created under duress, demanded by overseers who distrusted the silence of field work or who, perhaps, couldn't bear the natural sounds of enslavement and required a sweetener.... But the makers of the music found something deeper in it than an obligation to distract or delight.... These work songs pleaded for deliverance and were sung in defiance of atrocity. Spirituals, they were called. And they are this country's original folk music, sung out of the determination by the enslaved to orient themselves...toward a more human land—here or perhaps in a less earthly realm."

*He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. (Psalm 40:3)*

Morris argues that music has been a crucial tool for expressing dissent and mobilizing people, from the spirituals and gospel songs of the antebellum period to the protest anthems of the civil rights era and beyond. He also examines the different musical genres that have been used for protest, such as blues, jazz, folk, and hip-hop, and how each genre reflects the particular political and cultural context of its time. Music is a powerful tool for change. Those who were enslaved used music to send messages as a code to escape to freedom. Psalm 40:3 reminds us to trust God in all we do, even when it seems hopeless. The mouths of those who were enslaved were filled with songs and followed the music to the Promised Land.

### **Prayer**

Good and Heavenly Father, we come before you to give thanks for the power of music, and for the way in which it has been used throughout history to bring hope and freedom to those who are oppressed. We thank you for the spirituals and work songs that were passed down from generation to generation, and for the way in which they spoke to the deep longings of the human heart. We pray that you would continue to inspire us to use music in powerful ways to bring about change and to fight against injustice. May we never forget the sacrifices of those who came before us and may their legacy of courage and determination continue to inspire us to work for a better world. Amen.