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Worship Resources for

Mission Sunday 2009

November 8, 2009

Introduction:

These worship resources are designed to assist you in planning for worship on Mission Sunday. The focus of this special Sunday is on the mission of the church, a mission to which all are called, all are equipped, and all are sent. This particular worship resource has been prepared on behalf of Mennonite Church Canada Witness by Jeff and Tany Warkentin, Witness workers in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, who are encouraging young adults to grow as church leaders. The focus of this resource is on giving as an act of worship, something they are learning from their host culture. In Burkina Faso, it is customary to offer your food to someone else before you eat a meal. How might such a cultural practice bless our congregations as we engage in mission? Biblical precedents for such generous giving are contained in this service's lectionary based Scripture texts. Jeff and Tany pray that Christ's worshipful gift of his life and death might open the door for all of us to give more generously and thereby worship God more fully. For information on their ministry see *World of Witness*, p 47; ***KidsPak***: The Little Church in the Big City, www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/562 with additional stories of church members; or the Warkentin blog at www.warkentins-blog.blogspot.com.

Theme: *Giving Worship*

Scripture Texts: 1 Kings 17:8-16, Psalm 146, Hebrews 9:24-28, and Mark 12:38-44.

Suggested Hymns:

STJ 98 *All will be well*

HWB 37 *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

HWB 309 *Built on the rock*

STJ 5 *Come and be light for our eyes*

HWB 383 *God, whose giving*

HWB 411 *I bind my heart this tide*

STJ 3 *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

STJ 54 *Longing for light*

HWB 418 *Move in our midst*

HWB 389 *Take my life*

HWB: Hymnal – A Worship Book
STJ: Sing the Journey

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11

Invocation:

Almighty God, make us aware this day that we dwell in you. Holy Spirit, empower us to offer our minds, our souls, our lives, and our resources as an act of heart-felt worship. Come, Lord Jesus, come save us and help us follow your example of giving the best of yourself so that we are freed to give the best of ourselves.

Call to Worship: *Adapted from Psalm 146*

Leader: Praise the LORD!

All: Praise the LORD, O my soul!

Left: *I will praise the LORD as long as I live;*

Right: *I will sing praises to my God all my life long.*

Leader: Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals in whom there is no help.

Left: *When their breath departs, they return to the earth;*

Right: *On that very day their plans perish.*

Leader: Happy are those whose hope is in the LORD their God

Left: *Who made heaven and earth*

Right: *The sea, and all that is in them;*

Leader: Who keeps faith forever;

Left: *Who executes justice for the oppressed;*

Right: *Who gives food to the hungry.*

Leader: The LORD will reign forever; Your God, O Zion, for all generations.

All: Praise the LORD!

Prayer of Confession:

Lord, we come before you as your people, aware of our broken world where many do not have enough. We recognize how often we fall short of giving enough of ourselves; our energy, our time, and our resources to your work. We blame our busy schedules. Forgive us for living by our priorities instead of your priorities. Forgive us for tightly holding on, and trying to be in control, instead of letting go and trusting your lead. Work in us. Help us embrace your kingdom work so that our whole lives might become a ministry, a pleasing sacrifice of worship poured out to you. Amen.

Children's Time:

Gathering Activity: Welcome the children as they gather for children's time and encourage them to imagine themselves sitting on the lap of Jesus, and that he is telling them one of the stories he learned as a boy in Synagogue school. Show them where we can still read that story in our Bibles, in 1 Kings 17:8-16. Introduce the story theme with questions such as:

- Have any of you ever had something really yummy to eat that you did not want to share with anybody else?
- Have any of you ever shared a yummy treat with someone even though you wanted to keep it all to yourself? How do you think that made God feel?

Tell them that, in today's story, a woman from Zarephath did exactly that. And what happened in the story shows us how pleased God is when people do that kind of sharing. Listen:

Story: One day a man named Elijah got a call from God. Not a telephone call; no. Elijah heard God telling him to go and live in a certain town called Zarephath. Now, the whole area had not had rain for a long time. And without rain, food could not grow. But God told Elijah not to worry that there was no food. God said that a woman in Zarephath would feed Elijah.

Well, that was enough for Elijah. Off he went to live in this new town. When he got to the town, he met the woman and asked her for a drink and for a piece of bread. The woman was sad and replied, "I am just now gathering sticks to bake up the last of my flour and oil. After that, my son and I will die of hunger." She did not think she had enough food to offer Elijah. But Elijah did not give up. He said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go and make your bread and bring me some of it because God has promised that your jar of flour and your bottle of oil will not run out until the rain comes back and the land produces more food."

The woman might have been afraid, but she went and did as Elijah said. She baked bread, gave some to Elijah and there was still enough for herself and her son. Everyday she came back to her jar of flour and bottle of oil, and there was still enough flour and oil left to make bread again. This went on until it rained and other food grew again, so she never ran out of food, just as God had said would happen.

This woman's sharing made God very happy. Her sharing what she had with Elijah showed God that she loved and trusted God. When we share things we really like, it is like that, too. It is like saying, "God, I love you, and even if I give away my favourite toy, my favourite cookie, or even all of my money, I know, God, that you will take care of me and give me enough."

Wondering questions:

1. I wonder how I would feel if I only had a small snack and someone asked me if they could eat it.
2. I wonder if I would be able to give my last bit of food to someone else even if I was really hungry.
3. I wonder what we could share with others this week – a toy, a snack? With whom could you share it? With your brother or sister? With a friend? With someone who doesn't have enough?

Prayer: *Dear God. Thank you for all that you give us. Help us to share what you give us with others, and as we share, help us to think about how much you love us and how much we love you.*

Response: Now I will give you a chance to share with others. Here is a little snack that each of you may take – but the snack is not for you. This snack is for you to give to someone else, even if you would rather eat it yourself. But if you give it away, I think you will find, just like the woman of Zarephath did, that when you share with someone else, there will be enough for you as well, and that they will share the snack with you.

Sermon Leads:

1. In Burkina Faso, it is customary to offer your food to someone else before you eat a meal. When you buy something at the market, it is common that someone will ask you for it. When you give it to them, they will often give it right back to you. If the person who asks for it is really hungry, they will eat some of it and then give the rest of it back to you. This cultural practice inspired the children's story and can be built upon in the sermon.
2. Our God sustains and revives us for mission. How is God inviting us to "give it all away" like the widow in the 1 Kings text, or the woman in the Mark text? Is God inviting us to "go and live elsewhere" or to live sacrificially in our local context? Can we learn to count on God to take care of the details? How is God inviting us to do something radically different with our lives, to change what we put our time into, and perhaps leave the familiar, to integrate more wholly into God's plan for the world? God wants more than our money. God wants us as partners in mission. Have our lives, our work, and our church ministries dried up like the River Wadi (see beginning of 1 Kings 17)? Does this leave the door open for taking risks in following God to new areas of ministry and becoming more dependent on God?
3. As partners with God in mission, we dare to believe that, with God, all things are possible: Birds may provide us with food (see beginning of 1 Kings 17), the poor can have food resources miraculously replenished; even the dead may be resurrected (see end of 1 Kings 17). God works in mysterious and miraculous ways. How does our post-modern culture encourage or discourage such faith?
4. Can we think of sacrificing aspects of our lives as worship? Which common acts of giving are done grudgingly? Which ones are too ritualized? Which ones feel like acts of worship? In a context and understanding of God who gives, we can place giving and sacrifice back into the proper biblical framework as worship.
5. Christ reveals himself as the ultimate God-worshiper by giving his life in obedience to God's plan. How did Christ's worshipful gift of his life unto death open the door for all of us to worship God more fully? As followers of Jesus, what is our proper response to Jesus' act of worship? Are we also called to express our faithfulness through offering our own selves according to the model Jesus gave us and in response to the needs of the world?
6. As the economic world shakes from an "economic crisis," are we up to the challenge of dropping our last two coins into the treasury? Are we up to the challenge of giving what needs to be given in order for mission and ministries to continue, or do we succumb to the temptation of reducing our giving because our surplus and profits are less? What blessings lie in store for us as we learn to give sacrificially?

Offering:

Lord, help us to give more of ourselves each day as an act of joyful worship to you. Amen.

Or STJ 152.

Benediction

Now, may the Holy Spirit's encouragement and Christ's once and for all act of giving and worship empower us to continue our worship in acts of giving – of our thoughts, our prayers, our resources, and our whole selves. May our giving be an act of worship that fills us with joy and confidence in our faithful God to share the blessings we have so richly received. Amen.