

Stewardship Sunday, January 19, 2014

HWB - *Hymnal Worship Book*, SJ - *Sing the Journey*, SS - *Sing the Story**

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These worship resources are designed to assist you in planning worship for Stewardship Sunday. This is a Sunday on which we are encouraged to focus particularly on how we faithfully manage the financial resources God has entrusted to us. The resources are prepared in anticipation of Stewardship Sunday on the third Sunday in January, but they can also be used at any time of the church year.

Theme: Giving all to join in God's dream

Introduction:

What if you found an item so precious, you were willing to give up everything you owned to obtain it? That's hard to imagine in a culture which encourages wealth management and asset preservation. Perhaps this lack of imagination caused Jesus to compare the kingdom of heaven to someone who seeks pearls and finds one of such great value that it is worth liquidating all other assets to buy it.

There is a contemporary twist given to this parable. After the pearl seeker hands over everything (the funds from chequing and savings accounts, deeds to primary residence and cottage, car and boat, stock and bond portfolio, retirement funds and life insurance plan) and receives the pearl, there is a surprise. The seller of the pearl says, "Here is everything you gave me to purchase the pearl. I am giving all of these things to you for your use. They still belong to me but you are welcome to use them wisely. The only thing I ask is that whenever you can, whenever someone requests it, you consider sharing these resources."

God's dream is for everyone to share in shalom and God's abundance. We can buy in to God's dream by holding our material resources lightly in order to free us to give generously.

Texts

Matthew 13:45, Isaiah 49:4-6, Psalm 104, Philippians 4:4-9

Song Suggestions

- HWB 288 Rejoice, the Lord is king!
- HWB 84 Oh, that I had a thousand voices
- HWB 385 What gift can we bring
- Bryan Moyer Suderman CD My Money Talks, particularly track 1, Generous God, and track 10, There's enough for all. (2007 SmallTall Music) - www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2111
- Bryan Moyer Suderman CD A New Heart (2009), particularly track 10, I will trust in you. SmallTall Music. - www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2112
- SJ 27 God of the Bible
- SJ 57 Mayenziwe (Your will be done)
- SJ 60 Lord of all good
- SJ 78 Sizohamba naye (We will walk with God)

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4oYzMDxG34>

This video by Paul Plett builds on the story of the Good Samaritan in the context of Africa. It supports the theme of giving our all to embrace completely God's dream for us all.

Suggested Order of Worship

We Gather

Call to Worship

- Project Lynette Wiebe's artistic depiction of Psalm 104, www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2127, and read selections of this Psalm (1-9, 24-33).

We Confess and Reconcile

Prayer: (based on Isaiah 49:4, 6)

God of mercy, you are the one whose dream has inspired

* Song book abbreviations match those used for corresponding worship resources in *Leader Magazine*

us, who has called us and given us the skills and resources to join your work. But at times the task overwhelms us; we get discouraged and feel that our labour is in vain. We have exhausted our energy for no results. We have spent our money to no good end.

Words of Assurance:

God says: Don't be discouraged. I am your strength. I am giving you as a light to the nations so that my salvation reaches to the end of the earth.

We Proclaim

Children's time:

Use one of these stories and have children prayerfully reflect on how they share their gifts with family, friends, and faith family.

- Retell the story of the 10-year-old boy at an ice cream counter who had to decide whether to buy an ice cream sundae or just a plain ice cream. Recorded by Edwin Friesen in the book, *Giving your first fruits: Money, faith and worship*, p.64. <http://www.mennofoundation.ca/resources/publications/giving-your-first-fruits>
- Use the book, *All You Ever Need* by Max Lucado, which illustrates the abundant generosity of God which is available to all. We are all encouraged to share in the same way: "Freely you have received, freely give." - www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2113

If you are looking for personal stories and reflections on the theme of stewardship, you may want to explore *Giving your first fruits: Money, faith and worship*. A new resource from MFC, this collection of the writings of Edwin Friesen, Stewardship Consultant at MFC from 1989 until his death in 2008, is a gem. Edwin was passionate about the gifts we receive from God and how we live our lives to honour those gifts.

*Copies of *Giving your first fruits* were previously mailed to each Mennonite Church Canada congregation and may reside in your church library or pastor's office. The book can also be borrowed from the Resource Centre or read online at Mennofoundation.ca/GYFF. www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2114

Sermon prompts for Isaiah text:

Living toward shalom and salvation enables generous living. We recommend a purpose statement for the sermon, such as the following: 'God's dream is for salvation and shalom for all. When we move toward shalom, we are enabled to live generously.' Here are some resource links to help you flesh out such a statement.

- Isaiah 49:1-9 offers a picture of God's mercy and compassion and of the future kingdom when prisoners will be released and all things made new." –Reformed Worship, June 2006, p 16. www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2115

- Finding 'Salvation' in 'Shalom', June 9, 2013. The essay, found here (<http://consortiumnews.com/2013/06/09/finding-salvation-in-shalom/>), by the Reverend Howard Bess, expands on the many biblical connections between the concepts of "salvation" and "shalom" and reveals them both to be messages calling for the present world to become a place of human fulfillment. The links to generous giving and living abound.

- In the Believers Church Bible Commentary: Isaiah (2009), Ivan D. Friesen provides the following helpful links to NT connections:

...the OT chart[s] God's reign on a worldwide scale. The servant song in Isaiah 49 illustrates this agenda. The gathering and restoration of Jacob-Israel's fractured and dysfunctional kinsfolk in Isaiah 49 implies a healing of what has been broken. (cf. Roth: 139-42)...Simeon's blessing of the child Jesus in Luke's Gospel draws on Isaiah 49:6 to emphasize this healing aspect of God's salvation (Luke 2:29-32)... Jesus' commission to the eleven to "make disciples of all nations" includes the authority for healing and peacemaking granted to the servant of Isaiah (Matthew 28:19; cf.2 Corinthian 5:16-6; 2, where Isaiah 49:8 is quoted. (p. 311)

- Perry Yoder , *Banking on God: Exploring Salvation in the Bible* (Part of Good Ground Series), www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2116, writes the following in the back cover summary:

"Contrary to popular belief, salvation is not the end of our sinning or a ticket to heaven. It's not really an end at all. It is a many splendored thing; full of richness, like the pearl of great price in Matthew 13:45. Salvation is full of relevance for how we live our lives today. It's not simply the reward for a life well lived; it is the cause of a life well lived. Salvation is not a deal with God; as first illustrated by the exodus from Egypt, it is a miracle. It's a free pass, but one that demands something from us. ...Salvation celebrates new life, new purpose, new peace."

- Paul D. Hanson, in Isaiah 40-66, writes:

"Salvation is nothing less than the establishment of what the poet sings of in Isaiah 42:1-4, an "order of compassionate justice that God has created and upon

which the wholeness of the universe depends.” Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66, Interpretation*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 129.

- Anne Richards, *Children in the Bible: A fresh approach*, writes:

“Raymond Fung calls this [salvation] the Isaiah Agenda, God’s vision for the way the world should be... Salvation then is intimately related to met needs, growth and flourishing.” Anne Richards, *Children in the Bible: A fresh approach*, (2013 spckpublishing.co.uk) p. 29, p.53.
www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2109

WE RESPOND

Offering: SJ 148

Sending Blessing

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. *Philippians 4: 4-9*