

Many People's Sunday, May 3, 2015

March 2015, *Equipping* #154

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

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

Scripture Texts:

Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 148; Revelation 21:1-6; and
John 13:31-35

Theme:

Preparing with praise, love, and mission for God's Kingdom
to break forth in the church with all her diversity.

Introduction:

Many People's Sunday is an opportunity to thank God for
and to celebrate the diversity of God's multicultural church
as it enriches its North American Mennonite contingent.
The face of Mennonite Church Canada and also
Mennonite Church USA continues to grow in its diversity.
Similarly, there are many different kinds of creation listed
in Psalm 148. Just as each creature uses its uniqueness to
praise God, so do our diverse and unique congregations.
And yet we praise God with the same core identity - we are
all children of God. The goal of our worship is to bring all
things together to reflect the glory and the love of God.

Call to worship:

Read Psalm 148, using slides with different pictures and
themes at www.commonword.ca/go/92. Feel free to change
the background pictures to suit the composition of your
congregation.

Praising with Psalm 148

(Free feel to use your own language)

All: ¹ Praise the Lord.

Leader: Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

² Praise him, all his angels;

praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

³ Praise him, sun and moon;

praise him, all you shining stars.

⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens

and you waters above the skies.

Congregation: ⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for at his command they were created,

⁶ and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

Leader: ⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

⁸ lightning and hail, snow and clouds,

stormy winds that do his bidding,

⁹ you mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars,

¹⁰ wild animals and all cattle,

small creatures and flying birds,

¹¹ kings of the earth and all nations,

you princes and all rulers on earth,

¹² young men and women,

old men and children.

Congregation: ¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;

his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

¹⁴ And he has raised up for his people a horn,

the praise of all his faithful servants,

of Israel, the people close to his heart.

All: Praise the Lord.

As We Gather and Bring the Sacrifice of Praise:

Leader: Praising God is part of our work in heaven. Let's praise Him not only with our mouths, but with our hearts. We may need to pause and read the verses to discover the messages of the songs. (Worship leaders can read out one particular verse before singing the song or in the middle of the song.) Listen carefully and prayerfully to see if any words or phrases touch your hearts. Using our own words and language helps us to express our feelings of love to God more easily, especially in combination with the words of the songs we sing.

Suggested songs:

- HWB 100, *Praise him, praise him!*
(Hymns of Life #80 for Chinese)
- *God of Wonders* (Chris Tomlin) www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/c/chris_tomlin/god_of_wonders.html
- HWB 117, *Fairest Lord Jesus*
(Hymns of Life #65 for Chinese)
- HWB 87, *Great is the Lord*
- *Awesome God* (Rich Mullins) www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/r/rich_mullins/awesome_god.html#!
- *Majesty* (Michael W. Smith) www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/m/michael_w_smith/majesty.html

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, You are our creator who made heaven and earth. You are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. We come to worship You; for You made us, saved us, and gave us the spring of the water of life. We are waiting for Your Kingdom to come: a new heaven and a new earth. You called us to love one another. Our Father in heaven will be glorified as we love. We are preparing for Your Kingdom to come. We will continue to praise and worship, to love one another, and to witness Your name in all nations. We would praise Your name in one heart, one mind, and one Spirit. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Children's Time:

Learning to love one another with John 13:31-35

Tell the children that adults can learn much about love from the children for they have a pure heart to love. They also have more creative ways to show love, so this children's time will be a chance for them to teach the rest of the congregation about love.

Ask the children if they know how to sing "Jesus Loves the Little Children" and then sing it with them. This song reminds us that God loves everyone of us regardless of our race. Tell them that many different ethnic groups worship as they do. Ask them what else they think that song teaches about Jesus' love?

Invite some children to provide ideas, that they may have learned in Sunday School, how we could love one another. Prepare word prizes for their responses that are related to different cultural gifts. The leader can explain a bit about the significance or cultural meaning of the gifts.

Examples: The gift of a Chinese word, 福, that means blessing in English. A piece of farm land is a blessing of the family, a blessing where they can earn a living. Blessing can be simple.

The gift of greeting in Southern Germany, "Gruesdi" stands for, "May God greet you this day," and is a blessing for living with God.

Prayer: Thank you God, for the many ways we can learn about your love. Help us to love like you do. Amen.

Being led into Mission with a Sermon

Sermon Suggestions:

Acts 11:1-18 (Salvation plan for all nations)

The preaching of the gospel to Cornelius is something over which we Gentile sinners have reason to rejoice with thanksgiving, for it first brought the Gospel and its light to us and illumined our darkness. Peter broke the rules of Jewish culture to reach out to the Gentiles in this story in Scripture. We can identify with how challenging this must have been for Peter.

Sometimes it is much easier for us to reach the people in the same culture, especially when we deal with language barriers. However, God calls us to reach out to all nations. Just as Cornelius and his household were saved as they heard about the good news from Peter, others will be saved by hearing the good news from us.

The beautiful story found in Acts 10 shows how God leads an individual, Peter, to come and recognize His salvation plan is for all nations. His cross-cultural interaction was profound for him as well as for Cornelius and his household. Sometimes, cross culture interaction adds special meaning to a spiritual experience. We change in positive ways as we step out of our comfort zone to reach someone who is different from us, because this change and action is prompted by the love of God in the Christian's life.

Lead the congregation to see the future hope of God's coming kingdom. This is why we praise God, love one another, and are witnesses of God.

Revelation 21:1-6 (Future hope of all nations)

This passage lends itself to a gospel-focused sermon: Jesus is the spring of the water of life. It can also lead to the story about the woman from Samaria, a story in which Jesus crossed cultures to share his living water. As his followers, we can do the same, because his living water will bubble up in us as we follow His leading.

The Book of Jonah (Love is needed in mission)

From the story of Jonah, we learn about the love of God, whose judgement did not fall on Nineveh when they repented. The citizens in Nineveh, who were enemies of the Israelites, needed the good news as well as the rest of the world.

Benediction:

Use the prayer found in SS 200 first, followed by a benediction by the pastor.

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