



RECONCILIATION MINISTRY

SPECIAL OFFERING – WORSHIP RESOURCES

THEME: “EVERYONE HAS A STORY”

Matthew 13:10-17 (MSG)

¹⁰ The disciples came up and asked, “Why do you tell stories?”

¹¹⁻¹⁵ He replied, “You’ve been given insight into God’s kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn’t been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That’s why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight. In their present state they can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they’re blue in the face and not get it. I don’t want Isaiah’s forecast repeated all over again:

Your ears are open but you don’t hear a thing.

Your eyes are awake but you don’t see a thing.

The people are blockheads!

They stick their fingers in their ears

so they won’t have to listen;

They screw their eyes shut

so they won’t have to look,

so they won’t have to deal with me face-to-face

and let me heal them.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ “But you have God-blessed eyes—eyes that see! And God-blessed ears—ears that hear! A lot of people, prophets and humble believers among them, would have given anything to see what you are seeing, to hear what you are hearing, but never had the chance.

Call to Worship

Leader: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

People: And God saw that it was good!

Leader: During oppression and exile, God created ways where there were no ways.

People: And God gave liberation!

Leader: When people walked in darkness and lived in anguish, God sent a light to shine.

People: And God showed us the way, the truth and the life we ought to live!

Leader: Today, God continues moving, acting and speaking;

Let us hear closely to God’s story unfolding today.

People: Let us praise God for the story of salvation!

Opening Hymn

CH #543 “Blessed Assurance”



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Prayer of Confession

Gracious One, Alpha and Omega, Creator and Sustainer of our life, we come to you in prayer, knowing that your ear is always ready and open to hearing us. As we continue in the spirit of worship, preparing our hearts to receive your message and be challenged by the story of salvation, we want to take a moment and confess our sins, the ways in which we have failed you.

We confess that many times our ears have been opened, but we have not been willing to hear, we have stuck our fingers in our ear so we won't have to listen to your people's cry for justice. God, we confess that, sometimes, when we have let our ears heard it, we have done little or nothing. Forgive us, we pray. *[Silence]*

Forgive us for not doing beyond our words, for not praying with our feet and expecting you to fix it all, even when you've clearly called us to do great things in your name. We confess that so often we are numb to the injustice and oppression that abounds in today's world; we confess being indifferent to the brokenness of your creation. We confess, O God, that we have been silent and we have dwelt in the comfort of denial, or the fear of commitment. Forgive us, we pray. *[Silence]*

Forgive us, you Redeemer of all stories, for our sins of omission and commission. We need you, God, to continue writing a new story in our hearts; we need you, God, to create readiness, to nudge us toward receptive insight. Hear us, in this moment of silence, as we turn to you and confess our sins. *[Silence]*

Assurance of Forgiveness

People of God, Scripture tells us that "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Today we are forgiven. People of God, You have God-blessed eyes—eyes that see! And God-blessed ears—ears that hear! Now, let us commit and respond to God's forgiveness by sharing the story of God's redemptive love, a love that reconciles us with each other and with God, so that we continue to create readiness, and nudge others toward receptive insight.

Children's Moment

CH #113 "Jesus Loves Me!"

Highlight that it is through telling the story of salvation, as we read it in the Bible, that we know about God and God's love through Jesus. Therefore, we can only know each other too by telling our stories to one another.

What does the Bible tell us about justice and reconciliation?

What story can we start telling others about justice and reconciliation?

Sermon

We encourage preachers to ponder upon the power of telling a story, especially when related to the experience and/or witness of racism and oppression. Jesus is questioned by his disciples "why do you tell stories?" Why do we have to tell stories, even if hurtful stories, about the sin of racism? What good is it in telling such stories?



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Preparation Hymn (Communion)

CH #480 "I Love to Tell the Story"

Communion Meditation

The hymn says, "I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it, like the rest." Every time we come to this table we are reminded of God's story of redemption and provision. We come to this table to partake of the bread and the wine that represents Jesus' body and blood. Here we also tell the story of God who sets up a table big enough for us all to have a place, a table in which regardless of who we are or who we have been told we are; in God all are welcome, because we are all part of the greater story of salvation.

From Syria to South Side Chicago, from Venezuela to Charlottesville, from the song of Hanna to the laments of every mother losing her child at the arms of violence, every story matters at this table. Every story should be told from this table, because we are all part of the greater story of God's redemptive, reconciling and embracing love.

So, as we come to this table, let us remember the story of the night when Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, you do so in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim and tell the story of salvation.