

## Bethel Church Worship Guide – June 28, 2020

Peace verse: Nahum 1:7 & 15a (NLT)

The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes.

He is close to those who trust in him. ...

Look! A messenger is coming over the mountains with good news!

He is bringing a message of peace.

Light a candle in your worship space to represent the peace of Christ in your midst today.

Welcome: by Ellen Steinxr

Welcome to this time together when we explore the idea of generosity. Where have you experienced God's generosity this week? Have you been touched by generosity from your friends, family, or a stranger? This week we will be reading together the story of the widow and her two coins. It reminded me of the generosity of a widow, Anna, to my mom, years ago.

Anna's husband died when they had 5 children and the youngest was 9 months old. She had a strong faith in God, on whom she had learned to rely. When there wasn't food in the house when her children were young, she would pray and someone would bring her a bag of groceries. She believed in the power of prayer.

Doug and I had planned our wedding to be outside in my parent's backyard. My mom was anxious. What if it rained? We had a backup plan, the church, but didn't have any decorations for the sanctuary. My mom had spoken about her concerns to Anna. Anna assured her, telling her not to worry, that she would pray for good weather. My mom said it felt selfish to pray for the weather herself, but it felt all right for Anna to do it. Different times before the wedding we would talk about the weather and the backup plan. But my Mom would tell me that she had been reassured by Anna that she was praying. On the morning of the wedding, Anna was in the hospital and the first thing she asked the nurse the morning of our big day was: What is the weather? It turned out to be a beautiful sunny day.

My mom and I still remember Anna and talk about how she gave generously of her gift of prayer and reassurance. May we also be reminded of the gifts we have and remember to give them generously.

Hymn: Great God, we sing – Hymnal Worship Book #639

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mY3RnDCWkEM>

V.1. Great God, we sing that mighty hand, by which supported, still we stand.

The opening year thy mercy shows; that mercy crowns it till it close.

V.2. With grateful hearts the past we own. The future, all to us unknown,  
we to thy guardian care commit, and peaceful, leave before thy feet.

V.3. In scenes exalted or depressed, thou art our joy, and thou our rest.

Thy goodness all our hopes shall raise, adored through all our changing days.

Psalm reading: Psalm 146

Confession Prayer:

God, you asked for my hands that you might use them for your purposes.  
I gave them for a moment then withdrew them, for the work was hard.

You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice.  
I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

You asked for my eyes to see the pain of poverty.  
I closed them for I did not want to see.

You asked for my life that you might work through me.  
I gave you a small part that I might not get “too involved”.

Lord, forgive me for the times when I neglected to give all of myself.  
This morning I offer all of myself along with my tithe.

Remind me of my offering this week when you ask me to give but it isn't convenient.

Remind me of my offering this week  
when you ask me to share in a place where I don't feel comfortable.

Remind me of my offering this week  
when you ask me to love when it is with someone who doesn't make it easy to do so.

Lord, send out both me and my tithe  
as usable instruments to represent you during the coming week. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Offering and prayer: consider what you will offer to God this week.

O God, you are worthy!  
I offer you my praise. I offer you my heart.  
I offer you my money. I offer you my life.  
Thank you for everything you give to me. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

Scripture reading: Mark 12:41-44

Questions for Reflection on the Scripture:

1. Imagine yourself in this Bible scene, watching the people with Jesus. What word, phrase, sound, or image catches your attention? What question would you like to ask Jesus? What would you say this story is primarily about?
2. In this story, Jesus seems to be saying again that God's economics, and the way God measures, is quite different than culture at large. He said the widow contributed “more than” everyone else. Clearly, he can't count, right? In this scripture, we see that it's not so much the quantity (size) of gift that matters, but rather the quality or attitude of the gift. God looks at what we give compared to what we actually have (the proportion).
  - a. How do we measure giving, (our own, or that of others)?
  - b. Have you ever been in a context where preference was given to those who could give a lot? How did that make you feel?

---

<sup>1</sup> Written / compiled by Ellen Steinr.

<sup>2</sup> *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, #748.

3. Jesus doesn't necessarily discredit the gifts of the rich people (remember in Mark 10:21 he encouraged the rich man to give). Yet he draws attention to the poor widow for her sacrificial giving, her desire to honor and trust in God. Where do you think this woman learned to give? Have there been times when you chose to give sacrificially? Why? What did that require of you? What happened?
4. Some of us in the "middle class" may face the temptation to be judgmental when those who have little are extravagantly generous with the little they have. We may think (or say) "shouldn't they save it so they have enough for their needs?" What might we learn from the sacrificial giving or generosity of those folks or the poor widow in the story?
5. In my life, I've found it easier to be generous when my own needs are satisfied first. Yet no matter how much or how little I have, giving to God requires me to be disciplined and intentional about it. What motivates you to give? A man I know identified two kinds of giving. Disciplined giving is deciding in advance "I'm going to give \$x amount" and following through with that. Some people may call this their tithe. The other kind of giving is emotional giving – more spontaneous giving that is motivated by a cause or emergency that tugs at your heartstrings. My friend observed that many people today *only* do the 2<sup>nd</sup> kind. He asserted that disciplined giving is part of what it means to follow Christ and be part of the church community. How do you respond to his idea?
6. Stewardship is about taking wise care of the resources God has given us, *and using them generously* to promote healing and hope. Resources include a wide range of things: money, land, skills, a building, relationships, spiritual health, etc. Think of a time when Bethel did well at being a good steward of our resources.
  - a. Beryl Jantzx of Everence has written: "All ministries of the church ultimately are about people and that's what we should highlight ... A building program is mainly concerned with being able to better meet the needs of people – not with acquiring more bricks on the property."<sup>3</sup> When Bethel's renovation project begins, people will ask you what's going on. We might answer, "We are putting in a new elevator" or "we are adding a new entrance." Those answers focus on the bricks. How might we frame our responses to focus on people and ministry? For example: "Welcoming people with a variety of abilities and interests is important to us." Or, "We want to make our building as accessible to as many people as possible." Or, "We are looking for opportunities to use our building in new ways. What needs do you know of?"
  - b. How do you hope we can generously promote healing and hope using our renovated building, spiritual gifts, and other resources?
7. We began this series thinking about our personal "stewardship story" and how our attitudes about money and possessions were shaped by those around us and our early experiences. Write down 1-3 next steps you feel called to take in your stewardship journey. What have these stories from Jesus about money and possessions said to you, at this point in your life,

---

<sup>3</sup> Beryl Jantzx, "But It's Only a Story: Why Jesus told stories about money" in *Leader* Spring 2020, MennoMedia, p.29.

about how you might support the ministries of the Kingdom of God with your time, talent and treasure? What values / attitude / truth would you like to be sure you convey to the next generation through your generosity?

Response song: Cuando el pobre (When the poor ones) – Sing the Journey #69

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXtcllY4MII>

V.1. When the poor ones, who have nothing, are still giving;  
when the thirsty pass the cup, water to share;  
when the wounded offer others strength and healing:

*Chorus: We see God here by our side, walking our way; (x2).*

V.2. When compassion gives the suffering consolation;  
when expecting brings to birth hope that was lost;  
when we choose love, not the hatred all around us: *(Chorus)*

V.3. When our spirits, like a chalice, brim with gladness;  
when our voices, full and clear, sing out the truth;  
when our longings, free from envy, seek the humble: *(Chorus)*

V.4. When the goodness poured from heaven fills our dwellings;  
when the nations work to change war into peace;  
when the stranger is accepted as our neighbor:

*Chorus: We see God here by our side, walking our way; (x2).*

Intercessory Prayer: you are invited to offer your own prayers now, and/or join the Bethel group sharing and prayer time at 11:00 am by calling or logging in to GoToMeeting.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.

Hear now my prayers:

-for Christians everywhere, and for the Bethel congregation;  
may we be faithful in bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

-for those who are overcome by violence, for those who suffer injustice, for the poor.  
We pray for all who need healing and peace.

-for those who endure trials, for those who are sick or dying, and for those who mourn.  
We pray for all who need comfort and hope.

-for the nations of the world, for all leaders and for those who make policy decisions.  
We pray for courage, integrity, justice, truth and mercy.

Generous God, draw us into your story  
so that we may follow you into the joy of your kingdom. Amen.

Sending song: Teach me thy truth – Hymnal Worship Book #548

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaWVw4p7pKI>

Teach me thy truth, O mighty One, from sin, O make me free.

Prepare my life to fill its place in service, Lord, for thee.

Accept my talents, great or small, choose thou the path for me,

where I shall labor joyously in service, Lord, for thee.  
Help me to show thy glorious way that leads in hope to thee,  
till other souls their joy shall find, in service, Lord, for thee.  
Grant me thy grace for every task until thy face I see,  
then ever new shall be that joy in service, Lord, for thee.

Benediction:

May we have all the riches of assured understanding  
and the knowledge of God's mystery,  
that is, Christ himself. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> *Take Our Moments and Our Days*, Vol. 1, p.224.