

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP
Notes from Rodney L. Barbour
January 31, 2010

Theme: Pastor Alan writes: *Sometimes we have those God-moments when we sense God inviting us to get out of the boat, and walk his way. Peter did, and it was the walk of his life. Still happens...to us all...often when we least expect it!*

Preparation for Worship: Today, our Worship Band will lead us in two songs to begin our time together. The context of our first song comes from Nehemiah 9. In this story, the Israelites assembled in fasting, wearing sackcloth. They separated themselves from foreigners and confessed their sins. Then they read from the book of the law for an extended period of time BEFORE they were called to stand up and BEFORE they praised the Lord by saying "Blessed be your name". What a wonderful pattern to begin worship: prepare yourself, join with others of a like mind to worship the Lord, confess your sins, fill your mind and spirit with God's word. Preparing with this intensity will set the stage for praise to erupt from your very being. Here's a portion of this song:

**chorus: Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in Lord still I will say
Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your name.
Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your glorious name**

**Blessed be your name when the sun's shining down on me
When the world's all as it should be--Blessed be your name
Blessed be your name on the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering--blessed be your name**

Our second song of preparation comes from the Book of Revelation and is the story of eternal worship. Someday, this will be our destiny---to join the four living creatures who are continuously worshiping God and saying:

**Holy, Holy, Holy is The Lord, God Almighty.
Who was and is and is to come.
With all creation I sing, "Praise to The King of Kings,
You are my everything. And I will adore You".**

The description (from Revelation 4) from the door standing open in heaven: includes a throne and someone sitting on it; great bursts of light flashing from him as from a glittering diamond, a rainbow glowing like an emerald, twenty-four elders, lightning and thunder, four living creatures, as described above. As the living creatures cried "Holy, Holy, Holy...", the twenty-four elders fell down before him singing:

**Blessing and honor, strength and glory and power be,
To You, the only wise King.**

This morning as we worship, we lift our voices in praise for this time in the continuing unfolding of God's story!

Call to Worship: Today's words are reflective of the scripture passage Alan has chosen for this morning's worship. Jesus calms the storms around us, and wants us to trust Him through the turbulence of our lives.

Leader: Lord, when obedience to your command leads us into the path of the storm and we find ourselves bailing water, give us courage to step out of the boat and walk with you on the raging seas.

People: Help us not to fear or be distracted by our surroundings; rather, help us to keep our eyes focused on you.

Leader: Come to us when we are desperate, catch us when we fall and bring us safely through the tempest to the other side of our troubles.

People: You are with us on our journeys and at our homes. You sit with us at table and know about our funerals, weddings, commencements---our hospitals, jails, and unemployment. You are present in our labor and laughter, our rest and our tears. You know because you are with us, and come to us again and again---until we can say, "It's you! It's you!"

Hymn of Praise: This "battle hymn of the Reformation" is actually a hymn of spiritual warfare, a reminder in the "storms" of our lives that God is our fortress and that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are on our side protecting and empowering!

**A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing
Our helper He amid the flood, of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe.
His craft and pow-r are great, and armed with cruel hate
On earth is not His equal.**

**Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing
Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be: Christ Jesus, it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same, and He must win the battle.**

**That word above all earthly pow'rs, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also.
The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still:
His kingdom is forever.**

Confession: It can sometimes be difficult to enter into a corporate confession when there are specific sins listed. However, there can be great power in joining with others in a time of collectively opening hearts and minds to God's cleansing. Today, ask the Spirit to prompt you towards anything mentioned here to which you would want to speak with God.

Pastor: Merciful God, for the things we have done that we regret,

People: forgive us;

Pastor: for the things we have failed to do that we regret,

People: forgive us;

Pastor: for all the times we have acted without love,

People: forgive us;

Pastor: for all the times we have reacted without thought,

People: forgive us;

Pastor: for all the times we have withdrawn care,

People: forgive us;

Pastor: for all the times we have failed to forgive,

People: forgive us;

Pastor: For hurtful words said and helpful words unsaid, for unfinished tasks and unfulfilled hopes,

People: God of all time, forgive us and help us to lay down our burden of regret. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: God hears our confessions and forgives our sins. Realize these powerful words of assurance are for you.

Pastor: To all who turn from sin in sorrow, to all who turn to God in hope, this is God's Word of grace: We are accepted, we are forgiven, we are loved. This gift we have from God.

People: Thanks be to God.

Scripture/Sermon: Be sure and read Matthew 8:23-27. This is where Jesus calms the storm. The Sea of Galilee is an unusual body of water where sudden storms can appear with little warning over the surrounding mountains, stirring the water into violent 20-foot waves. The disciples had not foolishly set out in a storm, they have been caught without warning. Although the disciples had witnessed many miracles, they panicked in this storm. As experienced sailors, they knew its danger; what they did not know was that Christ could control the forces of nature. There is always a dimension of our lives where we feel God can't or won't work. When we truly understand who he is, however, we will understand that he controls both the storms of nature and the storms of the troubled heart. Jesus' power that calmed this storm can also calm the storms raging in our lives. He is willing to help if we only ask him. We do not need to exclude him from any area of our lives.

Song of Response: We close today's time of worship with words accompanied by a hymn tune from the composer Gustav Holst. We praise Jesus who is with us to calm the storms in our lives, and who through death has set us free and given us victory over death.

**O God, beyond all praising, we worship you today
And sing the love amazing that songs cannot repay;
For we can only wonder at ev'ry gift you send,
At blessing without number and mercies without end;
We lift our hearts before you and wait upon your word,
We honor and adore you, our great and mighty Lord.**

**The flow'r of earthly splendor in time must surely die,
Its fragile bloom surrender to you, the Lord most high;
But hidden from all nature the eternal seed is sown**

Though small in mortal stature, to heaven's garden grown:
For Christ the man from heaven from death has set us free,
And we through him are given the final victory.

Then hear, O gracious Savior, accept the love we bring,
That we who know your favor may serve you as our King;
And whether our tomorrows be filled with good or ill,
We'll triumph through our sorrows and rise to praise you still:
To marvel at your beauty and glory in your ways,
And make a joyful duty our sacrifice of praise.

See you in Worship this Sunday! Rodney Barbour