

Worship Service

BY MARK L. MOELLER

As the congregation gathers for worship, a woman gives each worshipper a penny.¹

Prelude

Call to Worship

Leader: We are gathered by God's Spirit to hear the story

**People: that uncovers our competitiveness
and invites us to true community,**

uncovers our wrong centering

and invites us to a right centering,

**and uncovers our need to hoard and exclude
and invites us to share and include.**

We give thanks for this story that exposes our assumptions
and challenges us to turn them around.

**We give thanks for this story that overcomes our timidity
and invites us to risk all for the sake of God's Kingdom.**

All: We will hear the story

**that uncovers our self-centered despair and distrust
and invites us to hope.²**

Hymn

"Tell Me the Old, Old Story" (verses 1, 2, 4a, and 3b)

Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
Tell me the story simply, as to a little child,
for I am weak and weary, and helpless and defiled.

*Tell me the old, old story; tell me the old, old story.
Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and his love.*

Tell me the old, old story that I may take it in—
that wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin.
Tell me the story often, for I forget so soon;
the early dew of morning has passed away at noon.

Refrain

Tell me the same old story when you have cause to fear
that this world's empty glory is costing me too dear.
Tell me the story always, if you would ready be,
in any time of trouble, a comforter to me.

Refrain

A. Katherine Hankey (1866)

Tune: EVANGEL

Unison Invocation

Loving Father, Creator and Sustainer of all,
as a hen gathers her young, you gather us to yourself.

Remind us that all that we say and do this hour
is not of our own making.

For all that we offer is in response to your story —
a story that reminds us that you made us,
and we chose to fall away from you into sin.

Yet, you did not leave us in our sin.

In your mercy and grace, you gave to us Jesus the Christ
in whom we have redemption.

Remind us that what is said and done in this hour
is not for our own sake.

Rather, it is for the sake of your Kingdom,
and for the world you love.

To you, Holy and Triune God, be
glory,
majesty,
dominion,
and authority
now and forever. Amen.

Silence and Meditation

Never despise homeless people who are stretched out on the ground
as if they merit no respect. Ask who they are and discover their worth.
They bear the image of our Savior. The Lord in his goodness has given
them his own image in order that his image might cause the hard-
hearted to blush with shame.

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-after 394)

A Story from Our Community

(This monologue is read aloud in the voice of a marginalized person – perhaps a homeless, poor, and forgotten member of the community.)

Today, you will hear the story about a woman who lost a coin. I've heard this story before and I'm guessing you have, too. It's the story of a woman who had ten silver coins. She lost one and turned the house upside-down to find it. When she found it, she called the neighbors and shared the good news.

I'm looking at all the people in this room today and I just wonder what you would do if someone in this crowd went missing. Would you search and search until you found the missing person? Would you call everyone else in this room and have a big party after finding the lost one? I'm guessing you would – because you belong to each other.

I'm wondering if you would go looking for me if I went missing. I know this is a strange question because you don't know me – you don't have me in the same way you have each other here today.

I think you know and have each other because you know one another's stories. I wonder if you would know and have me if you heard my story. Speaking of stories, *will you, can you* really get the meaning of the story of the lost coin if you refuse to hear my story? Are you afraid that you just might enter in my story and find yourself? Do you think you might see Christ in my eyes, feel him in my embrace, hear him in my voice?

The next time you see me on a street corner, know that I would appreciate a bottle of water and something to eat. What I would really like is to tell you my story – and maybe you'll tell me yours.

Solo

"The Servant Song"³

Richard Gillard (1977)

Suggested Tune: NETTLETON

Prayer of Confession

Loving and merciful One,
we thank you for the community in which you have placed us,
for the brothers and sisters with whom we walk this pilgrim journey.

Yet, we confess that we fail to love as you love.

We are quick to share our own stories
while we ignore the stories of others.

We fail to see your Kingdom in parables
because we fail to see your Kingdom in each other.
We push aside those
whom we believe are the least in your Kingdom.

Form in us a new vision of community in which there is
neither East nor West,
neither South nor North.

Challenge our assumptions,
and instill in us a holy *disease*
until all have heard your story.
For the sake of your Kingdom that is and is not yet. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Colossians 1:13-14

The Father has rescued us from the power of darkness
and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption,
the forgiveness of sins.

Silence and Meditation

Our forbears' belief that the slow digestive process of cows was well-suited to describe the process of engaging with Scripture stands in marked contrast to the language and expectations of a fast-food generation. Their wisdom calls us to a more gentle rhythm of prayerful reading in which patience, silence and receptivity are vital ingredients. In a world of sound-bites we need to learn again the art of listening with the ear of the heart.⁴

Robert Atwell

Gospel Reading: Luke 15:1-3, 8-10

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus]. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable:

"What woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Hymn

“Christ’s Parables”

Mark L. Moeller (2006)

Tune: BEACH SPRING (pp. 51-53 in this volume)

A Prayer for Illumination

God of light and not of darkness,
we thank you that in times past you spoke to your people
and led them through a wilderness.
Today, we find ourselves in our own peculiar wilderness.
Shed light on our path and lead us by your Spirit,
for without your guidance
we will surely lose our way.

Bless now the reading and hearing of the gospel.
As your servant speaks,
give words to utter,
ears to hear,
and hearts to respond.
Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Sermon: “Once Lost, Now Found”

The Giving of Tithes and Offerings

Hymn of Response

“We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations” (verses 1 and 4)

We’ve a story to tell to the nations,
that shall turn their hearts to the right,
a story of truth and mercy,
a story of peace and light,
a story of peace and light.

*For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
and the dawning to noonday bright,
and Christ’s great Kingdom shall come on earth,
the Kingdom of love and light.*

We’ve a Savior to show to the nations,
who the path of sorrow has trod,
that all of the world’s great peoples
may come to the truth of God,
may come to the truth of God.

Refrain

H. Ernest Nichol (1896)

Tune: MESSAGE

Sending Forth

Go now to love and serve the world
loved by Christ our Lord.

As you go, be the feet of Christ,
the hands of Christ,
the voice of Christ.

As you go, share stories of a sheep, a coin, and a son gone astray,
tell tales of tenants and talents, slaves and masters,
and a rich young fool.

Yes, tell these stories.

Share your own story.

And listen to those of others. Amen!

*Postlude***NOTES**

1 Too often our worship is a purely linguistic affair and we ignore the realms of sight, touch, smell, and taste. But worship centered on Jesus' parables offers many possibilities to engage worshippers more fully. This service based on the Parable of the Lost Coin begins with each worshipper receiving a penny. For the Parable of the Foolish Bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-13), we might adorn the vestibule with bridesmaids' dresses, or for the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:12-24), we might place in the sanctuary a Crock Pot cooking a roast. The things we touch, see, and smell can be avenues for hearing and sharing the salvific stories of God in Christ.

2 The anchoring points of this prayer are drawn from William J. Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1984), chapters 5 and 6.

3 Words and music by Richard Gillard, copyright © 1977 Scripture in Song, a division of Integrity Music Inc., CCLI Song No. 72673. For other permission to reprint the hymn, contact Integrity Music (www.integritymusic.com). An alternate tune for this hymn is NETTLETON.

4 Robert Atwell, "Introduction," *Celebrating the Seasons: Daily Spiritual Readings for the Christian Year* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2001), v.



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