

January 5, 2020
Singing through the Salvation Story

Prelude

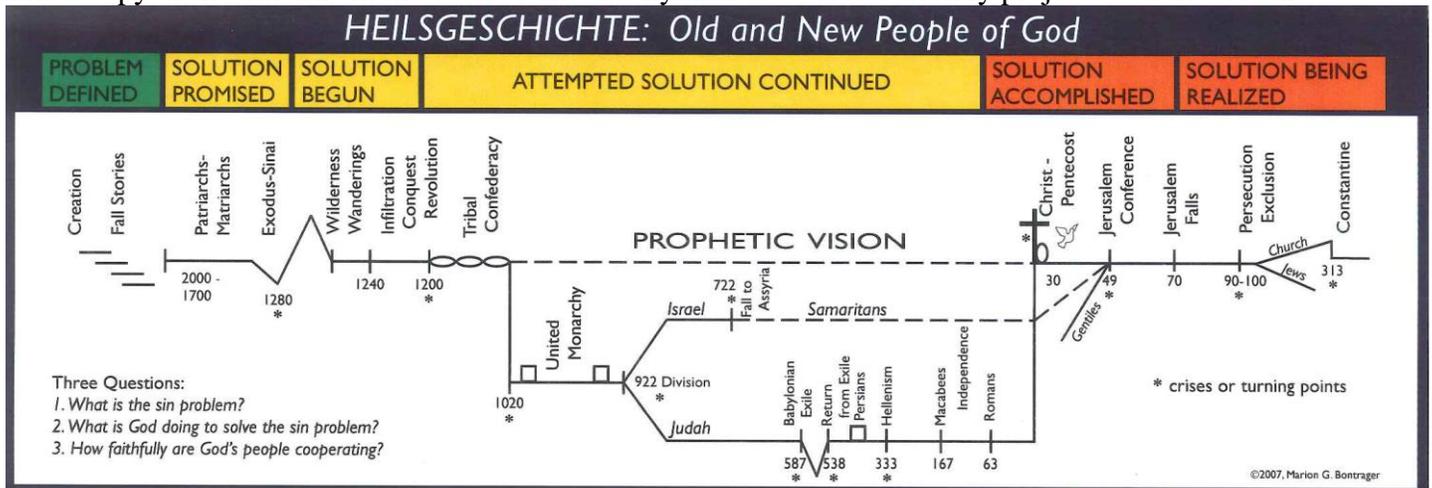


Gathering Song **God of the Bible SJ 46**

Welcome and Call to Worship

Good morning and welcome to Waterford Mennonite Church. In the midst of a season of looking forward to the New Year and new possibilities we desire to pause this morning to look back and to remember. Specifically as we gather as God’s people we will be reviewing the significant milestones of our God’s salvation history.

Several years ago as a congregation we had “Year of the Bible.” During that year we explored the *Heilsgeschichte*, God’s salvation history which was depicted by a timeline shown on a large banner. You can find a copy of the timeline in the back of the blue hymnal as well as currently projected on the screen.



This morning we will seek to hear and participate in remembering the story of God’s salvation in new ways as we join in singing through the story of God’s salvation. One new way will be incorporating the “Cs” which Pastor Katie utilizes in our faith formation with our youth and children. Along the way I will provide an introduction to each of our “Cs.” We will not be announcing each of the songs, so please follow along in your bulletin and have your song books ready to go for the next song.

- Creation**
- Collapse**
- Crisis**
- Christ**
- Covenant**
- Church**
- Closeness**
- New Creation**

Throughout the tour of the “Cs” we will pause at different times to feast our eyes on visual images of the salvation story from many artists. I begin by offering a special thank you to Anna Myers who created the painted tiles as our worship arts. And I offer a special thank you to Loanne Harms who has prepared artwork pieces that will be projected on our screen during our

time of worship. And, I say thank you to John and JD for leading us through this service of singing!

I invite you on this journey as we travel together through this significant story of God's salvation. The consistent theme throughout each of the movements is that God is, always has been, and always will be a God of salvation. Hallelujah!

And so I welcome each of you as together we join in God's story of salvation. Welcome to those who are gathered here today, and to those who are participating electronically. Together we worship our God who is "fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise, always faithful, and who does not change."



Creation



The story begins with God. In the beginning God created the world and delighted in it. God said it was very good. God made humanity in God's own image and was in close communion with those first humans. The King James Version of the Bible says that God walked with them "in the cool of the day." It is a beautiful image of companionship and closeness. It was very good. It was Shalom.

SONG: I sing the mighty power of God, H 46



Crisis



But humans broke their relationships with God, with others, with themselves, and with the world. They sinned, and its result was a loss of shalom. And everything quickly down-spiraled. We read of brothers killing brothers, violence, murder, hatred, inequality, abuse, and death. This is not how God wanted things to be. Pain and death were not part of God's good creation. So the rest of the Bible and our salvation history will describe God's activity to recreate and restore the all-encompassing shalom that was lost.

SONG: If the war goes on SJ 66



Covenant



Amazingly, God did not give up on humans. Already in the book of Genesis we read of the promised solution as God chose to work with humans in partnerships, called covenants. This promised solution is woven throughout the lives of the patriarchs and matriarchs: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Leah and Rachel, and Joseph and Asenath. Their stories remind us that “Called...means “chosen for a mission,” (it does) not (mean) God’s favorite people...(Their) mission was to begin the chosen covenant shalom missional people of God through whom the **entire** world would become the people of God.”ⁱ

SONG: Faith of our Fathers/Mothers PowerPoint



Closeness



But the way was hard. Eventually the people of God, the people of Israel, found themselves in slavery in Egypt. Yet God’s desire was always to restore the close relationship that had been there at the beginning. God reached out through Moses and made a covenant with the people - Yahweh would be their God, and they would be God’s people. That is amazing grace! Through this covenant God taught them what it meant to be God’s people...how to love God and love others.

SONG: We are often tossed and driven SS 72

One of the ways God taught them to worship, and to share with others, was in inviting them to give generously. God’s people gave of what they had: animals large and small, grain of all types. But always of their first and their best. They were taught to give their best in times of uncertainty or distress as well as in times of joy.

Our spiritual practice of offering our first and best happens every day of the week. On Sunday, it also includes financial offerings. I will now invite you to join in the salvation history period of wandering as you are invited to wander with your tithes and offerings and place them in one of the baskets located in the front of the sanctuary. However, to help experience this biblical period, I ask that you not return to your current seat, but find a new seat somewhere in the sanctuary. Allow me to reduce your anxiety by sharing that you will only be in your new place for a short while, not forty years, and then I will invite us to return to our original seats. It is also okay if your physical limitation prohibit you from finding a new seat. During this time there will be instrumental music playing and I ask us all to consider what it might have been like to be part of this wandering

group without a home, without their treasured possessions, living in the wilderness with God as their only reliable source.

(instrumental music)

I invite the ushers to please bring forward our tithes and offerings. Let us pray:

God, like our spiritual ancestors,
take our silver and our gold
not a mite would we withhold.
Take our love; our Lord, we pour
at your feet our treasure store.
Amen



Eventually the children of Israel made their way to Canaan, the Promised Land. To celebrate the arrival to the Promised Land JD will lead us in singing “This is the Day” while we return to our original seats. Please greet one another along the journey on your way back to your seats with a handshake, high five, or fist bump.

SONG “This is the Day” as all move back to seats. PowerPoint



Collapse

Once they were settled in the Promised Land, the people of God began to get comfortable. Soon, they decided they wanted to be like everybody else - a powerful nation, a center of power, a secure economy with a mighty ruler. So the people of God asked for a king. But God replied, “I thought I was your king.” God warned that if they had a king, things would not always go well for them. The king would take more for his court, leaving not enough for others. The king would require military service of their children. The king would lead them to worship other gods. The people said, “God, give us a king.”

God worked with them, making a covenant with King David. But not long after David, the kings began to seek power and sought after other gods. Things got worse. The people forgot God and their partnership with God. The Babylonians came and attacked Israel, burning the temple to the ground. The people of God were forced to leave their homes and many found themselves in exile.



Just as we have our times of exile, the people of Israel felt far from God, far from the visible reminders of their place in God's love. The prophets challenged the people to return to God and offered hope for the fulfillment of all their longings for God. God would send the Promised One & again be their God. When? How? Would they recognize the Anointed One?

SONG: Hark! The glad sound! H 184



God came and pitched God's tent among humans. God humbly took human form, the Incarnation— Emmanuel, God with us! That indeed was good news! And with that came surprises. The Promised One was both more and quite different from what God's people had expected.

SONG: Virgin Mary had a baby boy H 202

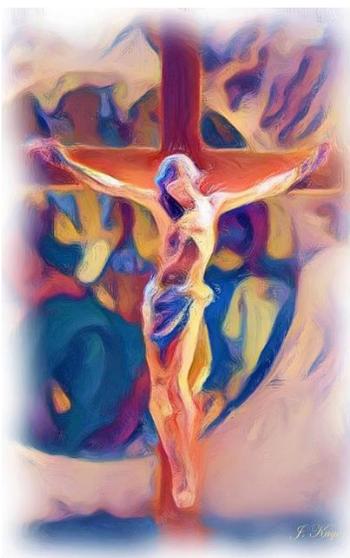


Children's Time – (focusing on childhood of Jesus)



Jesus came announcing the Kingdom of God. He healed. He proclaimed good news for the poor, for the outsiders. Jesus critiqued what would have been the religious leaders of the day. His life bore witness to the close relationship God desired with humans. These stories of Jesus' life and Jesus' teachings are central to understanding God's mission in the world and our own mission. If we are to follow Jesus in life, we need to know these stories. We also need to sign up to be part of the New Covenant –the covenant of love which Jesus brought.

SONG: Lord you have come to the Lakeshore H 229



But seemingly, it all fell apart. God-in-the-flesh died on the cross.

SONG: When I survey the wondrous cross H 259



But the reign of God did not come to an end the day Jesus died! On the third day Jesus rose and is alive today. Hope is re-born! (Cindy says while John plays the intro to H 345)

SONG: God sent His Son H 345



Church



When Jesus left the earth in bodily form, he sent his Spirit to lead us. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to breathe into life the church and to give us the gifts we need to continue God's work of reconciliation. We continue the work of Jesus, proclaiming and living in God's reign—not just as individuals, but as a body, the church, the new creation. The book of Acts tells how the people dedicated themselves to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

Congregational Prayer –



The Jerusalem Council from Acts 15 articulates and gives voice to the new creation of the missional church and the ministry of reconciliation. It breaks apart the boxes that God's people had put around God - the box that stated that God can only be found in a certain geographical area and the box that said that God's salvation is only for a specific ethnic group. The Jerusalem Council declared that the salvation and hope offered through and by Jesus is in fact for **all**. Furthermore we are reminded that as the Apostle Paul describes in Corinthians, we, the church, become the new creation which has been charged with the ministry of reconciliation.

SONG: How can we be silent, SJ 61



We as Anabaptists note the significance of the Radical Reformation in the 1500s and the ways our faith and faith practices have been shaped by the early Anabaptists. The early Anabaptists believed and practiced believer's baptism, separation of church and state, the centrality of Jesus Christ, studying the bible as a calling for priests and laity, and laying down the sword which kills and divides.

Thanks be to God, the story of God's salvation goes on and new chapters continue to be written every day as followers of Jesus around the world live into this amazing story that began clear back at creation.

SONG: I know not why H 338



New Creation



We wait in hope...for the time when all of creation will be reconciled to God and when God's kingdom, which is near us and among us and within us, will finally come in all its fullness. This morning we light our Advent Peace Lamp as we lift up the church in all places as together we pray with hope for God's reconciliation.

Light the peace lamp!

SONG: VT 29 Touch the earth lightly



I invite you to stand in body or spirit and receive these words of benediction before our sending song.

Benediction:

Go my friends with deep joy into this new year, joining the amazing salvation story of the One who is “fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise, always faithful, and without change.” May it be so! Amen.

SONG: VT 16 Could it be that God is singing

ⁱ Marion Bontrager, Heilsgeschichte Notebook, 79.