

TELL US  A STORY
JESUS' POWERFUL PARABLES

A STORY OF SPIRITUAL INSINCERITY

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

October 1, 2023

SERIES THEME: TELL US A STORY

Much of what Jesus has to say to you and me is contained within his parables. Parables are simple little stories that contain profound truths about life and eternity. For the believer, a parable takes a challenging spiritual fact and makes it clear. However, since the parable conveys spiritual truth, for someone without faith, the story remains only that—a story. Therefore, our prayer for this worship series is that Christ would send us his Holy Spirit, so that we might receive the peace and power Jesus offers us in his parables. Tell us a story, Jesus!

THEME OF THE DAY: A STORY OF SPIRITUAL INSINCERITY

You have maybe heard the accusation or perhaps even made it yourself: “He’s so fake!” That charge claims someone’s friendliness or kindness is a sham. Such insincerity bothers us. We would generally rather someone be honest about how they feel about us than be fake. Through a story Jesus teaches us that God feels the same. God doesn’t want us to simply go through religious motions like some sort of show. He sees right through that. God’s desire is that our repentance would demonstrate sincere sorrow over sin. God wants us to see the grace and forgiveness he has shown us in Christ, and in response, to love him back deeply and sincerely.

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
Quinton Corwin

Acknowledgments

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Morning Praise (page 207 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 778 Father, We Praise You

Stand

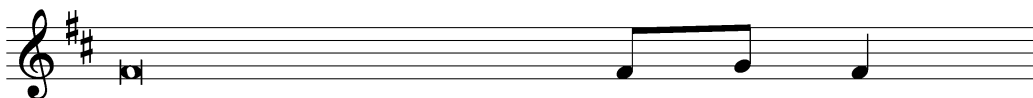
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

Hasten to save me, O God;
O Lord, come quickly to help me.

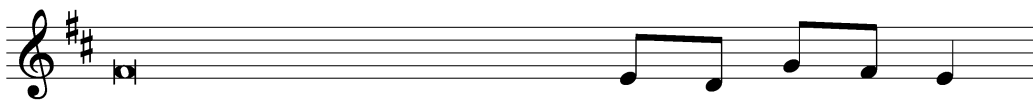
Jesus Christ is Lord of all:
praise and thanks to God!

O Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord

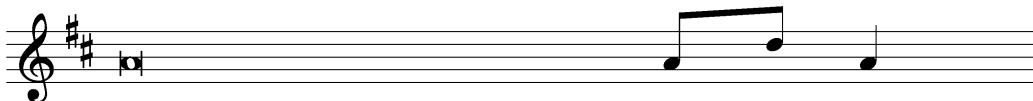
CW 208



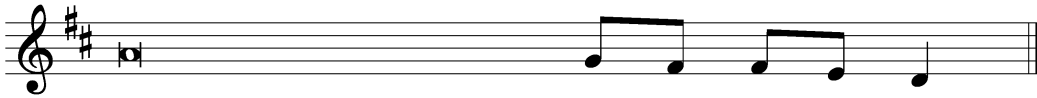
- 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord,
- 2 For the Lord is a great God
- 3 The sea is his, for he made it,



- 1 let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our sal - va - tion.
- 2 and a great king a - bove all gods.
- 3 and his hand formed the dry land.



- 1 Let us come into his presence with thanks - giv - ing,
- 2 The deep places of the earth are in his hand;
- 3 O come, let us worship and bow down,
- 4 For he is our God,



- 1 let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.
- 2 the heights of the hills are al - so his.
- 3 let us kneel before the Lord our mak - er.
- 4 and we are the people of his
pasture and the sheep of his _____ hand.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Mercifully grant, O God, that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, for without your help we are unable to please you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Ezekiel 18:1–4,25–32

The prophet Ezekiel gives a strong warning to Christians who have grown dismissive of their sin. God wants sincere repentance that leads to true obedience.

¹ The word of the Lord came to me.

² What do you mean, you who keep repeating this proverb concerning the soil of Israel, "Fathers eat sour grapes, and their sons' teeth are set on edge"? ³ As surely as I live, declares the Lord God, you will never again use this proverb in Israel. ⁴ Indeed, all souls are mine. The soul of the father is mine just like the soul of the son. The soul who sins is the one who will die. ²⁵ But you say, "The Lord's way is not fair." Listen now, house of Israel. Is it my way that is not fair? Is it not your ways that are not fair? ²⁶ If a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and practices unrighteousness, he will die because of it. Because of the unrighteousness that he has practiced, he will die.

²⁷ But if a wicked man turns from his wickedness that he has done and practices justice and righteousness, he will preserve his life. ²⁸ Because he has seen and turned away from all the rebellious acts that he had committed, he will surely live, and he will not die. ²⁹ But the house of Israel says, "The Lord's way is not fair." Is it really my ways that are not fair, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not fair?

³⁰ Therefore, I will judge each one of you according to his ways, O house of Israel, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn away from all your rebellious acts, so that you will not set out a stumbling block that makes you guilty. ³¹ Throw off from yourselves all your rebellious actions by which you have rebelled, and obtain a new heart and a new spirit for yourselves. Why should you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies, declares the Lord God. So repent and live!

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalms: 25: In front of hymnal- To You, O LORD, I Lift My Soul

Second Reading

Philippians 2:1–11

Moved by Christ's love and empowered by the Spirit, we sincerely attempt to imitate the selflessness and humility of Jesus.

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility consider one another better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look carefully not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Indeed, let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ⁶ Though he was by nature God, he did not consider equality with God as a prize to be displayed, ⁷ but he emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant. When he was born in human likeness, and his appearance was like that of any other man, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

Psalm 51:17



Refrain



Tone



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Gospel

Matthew 21:23–32

Through a story Jesus teaches that sincere love for God involved not just saying what God wants to hear but what God wants done.

²³ When Jesus went into the temple courts, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him while he was teaching and said, “By what authority are you doing these things?” and “Who gave you this authority?”

²⁴ Jesus answered them, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer it, I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men?”

They discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the crowd, since they all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.”

He said to them, “Then I will not tell you by what authority I do these things.” ²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ ²⁹ He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ He came to the second and said the same thing. The second son answered, ‘I will go, sir,’ but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?”

They said to him, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, "Amen I tell you: The tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, but you did not believe him. However, the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him. Even when you saw this, you did not change your mind and believe him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

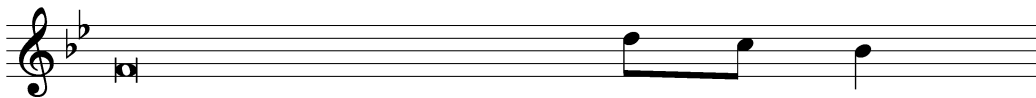
Hymn of the Day: 547 At the Name of Jesus

Sermon

Stand

We Praise You, O God

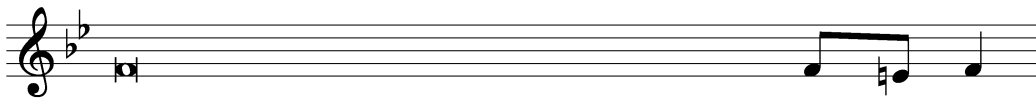
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- 1 We praise you, O God, we acclaim you as Lord;
- 2 Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of heav'n - ly hosts,
- 3 The white-robed army of martyrs praise — you.



- 1 all creation worships you, Fa - ther ev - er - last - ing.
- 2 heaven and earth are full — of your glo - ry.
- 3 Throughout the world the ho - ly Church ac - claims you:



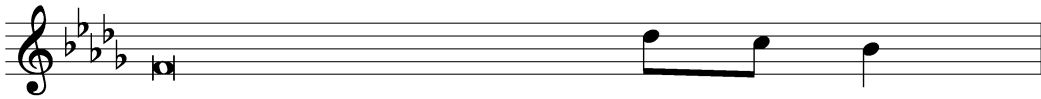
- 1 To you all angels, all the pow'rs of heav'n,
- 2 The glorious company of apostles praise — you.
- 3 Father of majesty unbounded; your glorious, true, and on - ly Son;



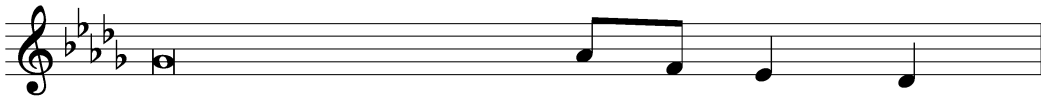
1 cherubim and seraphim, sing in end - less praise:
2 The noble fellowship of proph - ets praise you.
3 and the Holy Spirit, ad - vo - cate and guide.



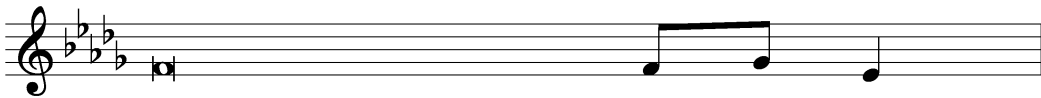
4 You, Christ, are the King of glo - ry, the eternal Son of the Fa - ther.



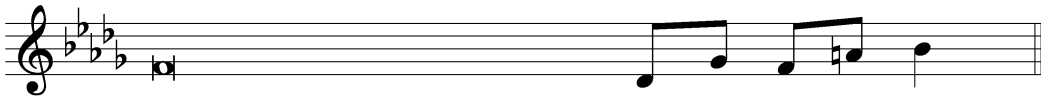
5 When you became man to set us free,
6 You sit at the right hand of God



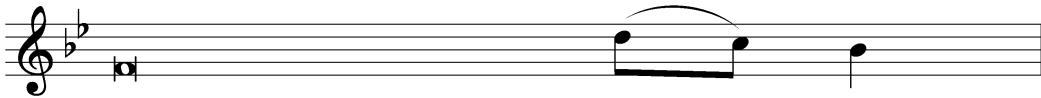
5 you humbled yourself to be born of a vir - gin.
6 in the glory of the Fa - ther.



5 You overcame the sting of death
6 We believe that you will come



5 and opened the kingdom of heaven to all be - liev - ers.
6 to be our judge.



7 Come then, Lord, and help your peo - ple,



7 bought with the price of your own blood,



7 and bring us with your saints to glory ev - er - last - ing.

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Eternal Lord, give us peace as we ponder the good news that you forgive our sins in Christ. Lead us to see clearly the path you have laid out for us.

Work in us so that we believe and live the Word we have heard today.

Provide courage and compassion to all who preach and teach your Word. Fill them with a love like yours as they proclaim your grace to us and all people.

Move us to love all ministers of the Word wherever they serve.

Guard and guide the families of our congregation. Lead husbands and wives to love each other with commitment, respect, and patience. Help parents to grasp the eternal value of keeping their children close to Jesus all their lives. Grant joy to those who are single, and make them a blessing to others.

Protect us from the temptations that surround us; give us pure hearts and minds.

Provide wisdom and insight to those who make laws and set policies. Give us respect for those who protect us from crime. Lead us to value the rights of our fellow citizens and to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Bless our land with peace and prosperity so that the gospel may be proclaimed to all.

Give us passion to share the story of your love with our family and friends. Overcome unbelief, and open the hearts of people everywhere to believe the good news that Jesus has forgiven their sins and opened the gates of heaven.

Fill us with joy over every sinner who repents and comes to trust in you.

Extend your healing power to those who are sick and suffering in body or mind. [Pour out your special blessing on . . . *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Give patience and compassion to all who care for the sick and dying.

Lift the eyes of the distressed to your love in Christ.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Gracious God, you govern and direct all things and you love all people. Hear our prayers, spoken and silent, and answer them in your wisdom and grace.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 956 Holy Is Your Name

sts. 1–2

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 213

Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful and answer me.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger. And in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those

who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom

and the power and the glory

forever and ever. Amen.

Let us praise the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The grace of our Lord + Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

Hymn: 793 Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship

Sunday: 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship and Communion

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