

RESOURCES

FAIR TRADE

Worship Aids



FAIR TRADE – Worship Aids

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:12-14

Nehemiah 5:1-13

Colossians 3:18-4:1

Philemon

Leviticus 25: 8-13

Luke 4:17-21

1 Peter 2:9



MUSIC

All Creatures of Our God and King (St. Francis of Assisi, VU 217)

Amazing Grace (John Newton, SASB 308)

Go, Make a Difference (Steve Angrisano and Tom Tomaszek, MV 209)

I Saw the Rich Ones [Work for a World] (Pat Mayberry, MV 200)

Jesus shall reign... (Isaac Watts, SASB 160)

Lord of All Glory (Harry Read, SASB 957)

They Shall Come from the East... (John Gowans, SASB 170)

SASB – Salvation Army Song Book

VU – Voices United

MV – More Voices

PRAYER

As we pray, we are mindful of the world and all its inhabitants. Both young and old, large and small, near and far.

(pause for silent prayer)

We remember people who labour in fields and factories to make the things we use every day.

(pause for silent prayer)

We remember people who search for enough food and water to make it through each day.

(pause for silent prayer)

We remember people who suffer physically and emotionally because of the brokenness of life in this world.

(pause for silent prayer)

We remember people who hunger for education and opportunities and control over their lives.

(pause for silent prayer)

We remember people who are exploited and taken advantage of.

(pause for silent prayer)

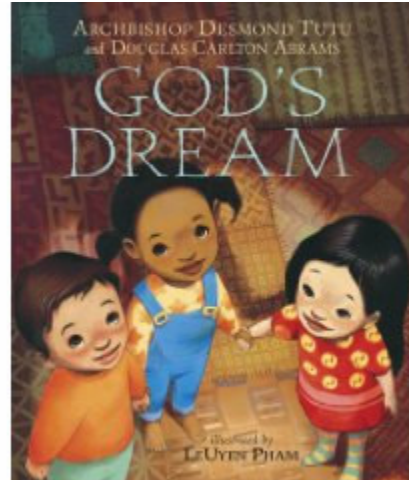
Make us ever more mindful as we live each day, as we buy and sell things, as we eat and play and work, that we are connected to people around the world, that we are connected to the earth and every living thing, and that everything we do has an impact on our global community.

May your kingdom come to earth and your will be done here as it is in heaven.

Amen

CHILDREN'S TIME

Children's Story – *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams (check your local bookstore or library for a copy)



OTHER

Video

Link: The video magazine of The Salvation Army, Issue #21

"... we continue on the theme of Fairtrade and find out what it means for the growers and producers."

(available through The Salvation Army Ethics Centre library)

A number of downloadable videos on Fair Trade can be found at:

<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources/films/default.aspx>

SERMON

Why do you keep slaves?

Nehemiah 5:1-13/Colossians 3:18-4:1/Philemon

Explain the back story for the Nehemiah passage (Nehemiah, a leader in the Persian Empire, goes to Jerusalem to help them build a wall to protect their city. They had returned from exile 100 years previously, rebuilt the temple, but are not safe because they don't have a wall, etc.)

Re-read /Re-tell the story of Nehemiah 5:1-13.

Basically, things aren't going so well for the people of Jerusalem. There's a famine in the land. They owe the government money for the land they're living on. And everyone, mothers and fathers, sons, daughters, probably even grandma and grandpa, are working day and night to build the wall. And it seems that while no one was looking, something terrible has happened: people have started selling their families into slavery in order have enough money to buy grain.

The people seem to think they had no other choice; that slavery is inevitable; that selling their sons and daughters is the only answer to their economic crisis; that they are powerless to do anything about it.

Nehemiah seems really surprised to find out that this is going on. He has been concerned with other matters as well.

But now that he knows, he's livid.

He can't believe that all this time they have been rebuilding the temple and gathering the scattered Jews from far flung places AND they have also been buying back their Jewish family members who were enslaved to the Gentiles, only to have them sold back to the Gentiles and in need of rescue one more time! It's absurd.

He wonders if the Jews have not valued freedom if they only use it to enslave themselves and their neighbours again.

The Jews are in debt.

Maybe they are also greedy.

And maybe even a little bit lazy.

The answer to their problem is to start trading slaves.

When Nehemiah accuses them, they cannot defend themselves. He's right to be so angry. It really is horrible.

But they do seem to understand the basic injustice in what they have done:

v. 5a "Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery."

They have turned their brothers and sisters into slaves.

Question: Are the Jews in Nehemiah's day really that different than us?

Explain/Describe sweatshop labour and cash crop farming in underdeveloped countries. (See Fair Trade: Bulletin Insert & Fair Trade: Resources for more information.)

In late capitalism we have total commodification of life. Everything is for sale. We don't sell our friends & relatives. Why are we so comfortable with the fact that strangers are being sold?

Question: Are people working in sweatshops and cash farms our brothers and sisters? Are people working in sweatshops and cash farms our slaves?

Excerpt from *Colossians Remixed* by Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmat (pp. 212-213)
(See Fair Trade: Resources)

"Well just look at the tag in the clothing that you are wearing. If that article of clothing was produced in what was just called an Economic Processing Zone, then the odds are pretty good that you can name the brand of clothing you are wearing as a slave trader. And all of us who purchase these goods are thereby complicit in slavery..."

It all sounds rather sinister when you put it that way.

There is nothing innocent about economic oppression. There is no room for Christians to be "balanced" and "careful" when we are talking about an economic idolatry that will sacrifice children in its service. Slavery *is* sinister no matter how it gets packaged.

Then what are we to do? How do we proclaim [God's] liberating word to slaves when they are halfway around the world? It's not as if we have any power over their working conditions. It's not as if they are our slaves whom we need to release.

But that's just the point. They *are* our slaves. Every time we step into a Wal-Mart or Niketown or Gap or Winners and exclaim over the great deal we can get on an article of clothing, or how trendy we now look, we've made sweatshop workers out of slaves. Every time we buy coffee that isn't shade grown and fairly traded, we've made those coffee producers and their children into our slaves. Every

time we have purchased a product – any product – that says Made in China, or Indonesia, or the Philippines, or Sri Lanka, it is pretty likely that we have made someone our slave.

But we have no choice about buying products made in those places. Some things can be bought only from these companies! Buying some of these products is inevitable.

Inevitability is the language of empire. Whenever we hear “We have no choice,” our ears should perk up. It is precisely the strategy of the empire to take our imagination captive so that we think we have no choice. When a certain lifestyle seems inescapable, you need to realize that you are imprisoned...”

Draw connections between ancient slavery and the slavery of late capitalism: it’s about economic insecurity, it’s about greed, it involves people we should think of as brothers and sisters, we resign ourselves to it as if it were inevitable.

The Kingdom of God proposes an alternate system: love. Read Colossians 3:18-4:1.

We might come to these passages often to talk about wives and husbands or fathers and children, but we tend to historicize the part about slaves, claiming that it’s not a part of our lives anymore, and we gloss over it, or skip ahead. But we’re beginning to see that slavery is still alive and well. And that we might be both slaves and masters in the economic system we live in. Maybe both the instructions to slaves and the instructions to masters are instructions we should listen to.

Slaves: Serve wholeheartedly. You will be rewarded by God for the good you do. Do the will of God from your heart.

Masters: treat your slaves in the same way: serve wholeheartedly. You will be rewarded for the good you do. Do the will of God from your heart. And don’t threaten anyone because you have a master too. You and them, you’re all the same. You’re all human. You have the same flesh and blood and mind and spirit, no matter how far apart you may live. God made all of you, is master over all of you. And God isn’t playing favourites with anyone.

So both of you, slaves and masters: Be comrades. Be friends. Be family.

Just like Paul told Onesimus about his slave Philemon.

Onesimus is a member of the church at Colossae. Paul refers to another letter that accompanies the letter to the Colossians, and scholars suspect that it might have been the letter we know as Philemon. Philemon was a runaway slave who fled to Paul for help. From the letter to Philemon, it seems possible that Philemon is in the room as Paul’s letter and the bit about masters and slaves is read aloud to the Colossians. This is powerful stuff in a community that has real problems with real slaves.

But Paul is saying telling Onesimus and everyone else to make their slaves into brothers and sisters.

Remember that the people in Nehemiah's day were doing the opposite: They were turning their brothers and sisters into slaves.

It's as if God might be saying to us: You're going to be tempted to treat your brothers and sisters like slaves. Things might get busy. You might get into a tough spot. Competition might be fierce and you might feel like you need to use other people to get ahead. But I'm telling you to treat your slaves like brothers and sisters. And who among you would exploit a loved one? Would beat or abuse them? Would deny them freedom and good life?

Who is your slave?

How can you make them family?

Haskell Miller in *Social Ministry: An Urgent Agenda for Pastors and Churches*:

"You and your congregation cannot solve the problem of poverty, but by the grace of God you can make a dent in it. You can be part of the solution. You can teach understanding and fairness. You can pay and demand decent wages. You can vote for economic policies that express ethical concern for the interest of all parties involved. You can stay aware and oppose unfair employment practices, wages, or discriminating treatment of any kind. You can reject social class attitudes and cultivate attitudes of compassion and caring. Wherever possible, you can help the poor people help themselves. You can stay on guard against paternalism and seek ways of actively identifying with those who need your help. In short, you can be, and ought to be, advocates for the poor." (It would not be irresponsible to the text to add 'slavery' where the quote mentions poverty, and slaves where it also mentions the poor).

SERMON

Proclamation of Holiness (prepared by Cadet Rob Jeffrey)

Texts: Lev 25: 8-13; Lk 4:17-21; 1Pet 2:9

Focus: Holiness is more than a personal experience. It has a deeply social component that seeks to bring about the Year of the Lord's Favour (the Kingdom of God on earth).

Function: To call people to a life of holiness that works to bring justice to the poor of the earth.

Introduction: If you grew up in The Salvation Army many years ago, you would likely have a very distinct idea as to what holiness is. After all, we are a church born out of the holiness movement. Our holiness scholars and writers, Samuel Logan Brengle, Frederick Coutts, and Ed Read are celebrated throughout the Christian church. Holiness is deeply entrenched in our doctrines and Articles of Faith. And yet in our practice holiness more often than not meant enforced religious piety. In other words, if you abstained from going to the cinemas then you were holy; if you avoided picking up scissors on a Sunday you were holy. Holiness was usually confined to what an individual did. But the Gospel of God demands a better understanding of holiness. I want to talk about holiness in the context of Jubilee – the declaration that God is in control and that the dark night of injustice will eventually give way to a new morning of restoration.

As a young woman my grandmother lived in Pictou, Nova Scotia, where she worked as a welder in the shipyards. There she spent many hours every day building ships that would be used in the war effort. Like many towns across Canada during the Second World War, life in Pictou was difficult. Families were broken up as fathers, sons, and husbands were far from home, fighting and dying on the battlefields of Europe. The families left behind had to work that much harder just to survive. Their hardships were further compounded by the ration card system where they could only purchase a certain amount of food that was never quite enough. The nights were a time of fear as families sat huddled in the darkness listening to the frightful wail of the air-raid siren. Life was bleak. But things would soon change. When the Allies defeated the enemy in the final Battle of Berlin, victory in Europe was declared. When news of the war's end had reached Canada, my grandmother told me that work in the shipyards came to a grinding halt. The war was over! Suddenly the veil of sadness, depression, and fear that had hung like a cloud over Pictou and every other Canadian town was lifted and pure joy broke through. Jubilee had come! When the townsfolk laid down their tools and picked up their fiddles and bagpipes and drums to play and dance in the street because their loved ones were coming home, jubilee had come! That sense of pure elation, that sense that every wrong would now be righted was no doubt what the Children of Israel experienced when God declared a year of jubilee.

Judgment in the Text: (Jubilee was necessary to correct the injustices of the Israelite nation)

Jubilee is a celebration, a time of joy and partying the likes of which we've never seen. But though we sometimes today have celebrations for no reason, jubilee was no

free party. And it was not to be held frequently. Held every fifty years, your average Israelite would experience only one Jubilee in his or her lifetime. And although the passage in Leviticus details the requirement to hold a jubilee there is little scriptural evidence that the nation of Israel or Judah ever observed a jubilee year. Nonetheless the concept remained an important one that appears again and again throughout the Scriptures.

Israel failed time and time again to live up to the calling and purpose that God had raised her up for. To a nation of slaves God gave liberty. Yet the same freed slaves would one day become slave masters, even enslaving their fellow Israelites. To a nation of landless immigrants God gave land. And everyone in Israel was to be given land, both rich and poor. Land was of such vital importance that God decreed it could not be sold. Take away an Israelites land and you take away his nationality and his status. And yet this nation of once landless immigrants usurped the land from their own countrymen. And so to call Israel back to be the nation God had destined it to be, God through the prophet Moses institutes a year of jubilee to rectify the sins of the nation, to set everything right, to give them a fresh start.

During jubilee three things happened: 1) those who were dispossessed of their land could return home. All bought land reverted back to its original owner; 2) every Hebrew slave became a free person; and 3) the people were released from the toil of cultivating their land for one year living on an abundant harvest from the previous season that, touched with the miraculous hand of God, would last them three full years. God provides for his people. Thus in Luke 4, Jesus draws on this imagery when he reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news (Gospel) to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, [and] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." To proclaim Jubilee.

Judgment in the World: (God's Kingdom is necessary to correct the injustices of our world.)

The conditions that required the year of jubilee are sadly still with us today. The use and ownership of land is still beyond the grasp of many people around the world. As we reflected recently, slavery still exists in our world in what we call human trafficking. The basic dignity that every human being is owed is not an enforceable right in many countries. Women and children are still the primary targets of victimization. In our own prosperous country, the basic comforts of life still elude many people. And we continue to exhaust our natural resources, our fields if you will, to the point where we're soon going to be without. This is not the world God called us to live in. True observance to the Lord's command to be holy encompasses more than mere individual efforts. Holiness is more than an individual's attempt at purity. John Wesley, the father of our Army's theology shows us the true picture of holiness when he says, "There is no holiness but social holiness." Holiness is not merely lived out in the heart. It's lived out in the church, in the neighbourhood, and in the communities of our world. It's lived out in my interaction with you and your interaction with me.

Grace in the Text: (Jesus' Kingdom makes the promise of jubilee a reality)

Flash forward several hundred years from the book of Leviticus. Jesus is in the synagogue and the text suggests that he was asked to read Scripture (for it was the custom of the synagogue leader to select the Scripture passages). But unlike today when my friends hear read to you the passages I selected for them, Jesus probably ignored the direction given to him because it says in verse 17, "He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written." He found the place; Jesus it seems had in mind already what he was going to read. He reads that memorable passage in Isaiah where he proclaims the promise of jubilee that will be brought about by his ministry. He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. You see it was the custom in the synagogue to stand for the reading of Scripture and to then offer commentary or a sermon if you will, while sitting. Jesus sits down and gives one of the shortest sermons any of his listeners would have ever heard: "Today," he said, "this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Wow. Luke says that every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. What a message! That Jesus of Nazareth could restore the fortunes of Israel and grant her jubilee was unlikely for this lowly carpenter. And when he died on a Roman cross, his followers scattered, it became all the more implausible that Jesus could do what he promised to do. But the hope of jubilee came on that resurrection Sunday when life flowed back into the body of the crucified Christ. Jubilee came when the risen Lord appeared to his Disciples and said, "It's me Thomas, don't you see? Touch my side." Jubilee came when Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into the lives of his disciples turning a group of frightened followers into spiritual leaders, braving death itself if it meant bringing glory to God. Jubilee came when Christ grafted the new branch called the church on to the tree of the Jewish faith and God said to you and me, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Grace in the World: (We [the church] must continue to strive for the Kingdom of God to bring jubilee into the world)

We are that Holy Priesthood and we are called to proclaim the good news. All of the Scripture we read today contains the command to proclaim. In Leviticus, the people proclaim liberty, in Luke, Jesus proclaims release to the captives, and in 1 Peter, we are told to proclaim God's mighty acts. To proclaim something doesn't mean to just say something; it is more than communication. To proclaim means to "show or reveal clearly what something is." We are called to holy living as a community of believers, there is no doubt about that. We are holy because God declares us to be a holy priesthood. We live out our holiness when we live lives that point people toward the reality of the Kingdom of God. We do this by living for jubilee even though we live in a world that forgets jubilee. We are holy when we bring 'good news' to the poor; we are holy when we proclaim release to those held captive. Charles Wesley sang the song of jubilee when he wrote "He breaks the pow'r of cancelled sin, / He sets the pris'ner free; / His blood can make the foulest clean, / His blood avails for me."

Jubilee is coming folks, do you believe that? No longer will our children be enslaved by the drug trade because jubilee is coming! No longer will our daughters sell themselves on the street because jubilee is coming! No longer will the rich oppress the poor because jubilee is coming! No longer will HIV/AIDS devastate Africa because jubilee is coming! No longer will children go hungry in a world of plenty because jubilee is coming! Jubilee is coming; jubilee will arrive if the church steps up and throws off its cloak of silence. Jesus is the hope of the world. But in God's wonderful design, God works through the church to share his hope with the world. My friends there is no one else better equipped to solve the injustices of the world than us. We don't have political power, we have perhaps limited influence, and even less money, but we are infused with the greatest power imaginable, the will and blessing of the Living God! Holiness is both a call to action and a call to celebrate. There's a splendour in holiness that involves rejoicing – rejoicing for the victories that we do win in this war against the enemy. And like my grandmother's coworkers who danced in the streets to celebrate the war's end we also are called to dance and celebrate the many instances when the Kingdom of God breaks through into our world and into our lives. My friends, "Today the Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Let us pray.