

Singing Salvation Story – The Heilsgeschichte

Central District Conference

Lois Johns Kaufmann

The Central District Conference theme for the next two years is *God's story...our stories*. For all of us as followers of Jesus, the Bible is central. Through it we come to learn about God and God's mission among us. One can think of the Bible as 66 books. And one can also think of the Bible as one story with a plot, characters, tension and resolution. Today we will sing God's story, Salvation Story, German: Heilsgeschichte.

The story begins with God, the 1st character. God created the world and delighted in it. God said it was *very good*. God made us/humanity in God's image and was in close communion with those first humans. I love the KJV phrase—God walk with them “in the cool of the day.” It is a beautiful image of companionship and closeness. It was *very good*.

Creation: HWB 46 *I sing the mighty power of God*, vs 1 & 2

The closeness between God & humans was broken by sin. God set about bringing humanity back by making a covenant with Abraham and Sara, and blessing them so that thro their family, all humanity would be blessed. But the way was hard. Eventually the people of God, the people of Israel, found themselves in slavery in Egypt. Yet always God's desire was to restore the close relationship that had been there at the beginning.

Exodus: HWB 164 *When Israel was in Egypt's land*, vs 1&4

God reached out thro Moses and made a covenant with the people. Yahweh would be their God and they would be God's people. That is amazing grace! Thro the covenant God taught them what it meant to be God's people...how to love God and love others. God's presence led them. With visible symbols of God's presence--the Ark of the Covenant, the Cloud and Pillar of Fire, God led them.

Wandering: HWB 419 *Lead on O cloud of presence*, vs 1&2

Eventually they made their way to the Canaan, the Promised Land... There was the era of judges, then the era of the prophets and kings. The Bible says of the good kings, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.” But the other kings, well..., not so much. So God used Assyria to conquer Israel and Babylon to conquer Judah...taking away God's people into captivity. 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. (We will sing the next two songs back to back. Second song--**just the refrain 2x.**) Hear their longing for a restored relationship with God, for returning to Zion, Jerusalem.

Exile: HWB 148 *By the water* - sing once in unison, then as a round

Return from exile: SS 6 *Save us, O Lord*, Refrain X2

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?

Waiting for Jesus: HWB 172 *O Come, O Come, Immanuel*, vs 1&5

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

Coming of Jesus: SS 37 *Firstborn of Mary*, sing twice

Jesus came announcing the Kingdom of God. He healed. He proclaimed good news for the poor, for the outsiders. Jesus critiqued for what would have been the religious leaders of the day. He critiqued what would have been the conference leaders of that day! His life bore witness to the close relationship God desired with humans. We love these stories. 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 need to sign up to be part of the New Covenant --the covenant of love which Jesus brought.

Jesus' Ministry: *Tell me the stories of Jesus*, vs 1&4

But it all fell apart, seemingly. *God Incarnate* died a humiliating death--the death of a criminal.

Jesus' Death: HWB 257 *Were you there*, vs 1&4

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!

Resurrection: HWB 280 *Christ the Lord is risen today*, v 1

When Jesus left the earth in bodily form, he sent his Spirit to lead us in continuing the work of Jesus, in continuing to proclaim and live in God's reign--not primarily as individuals, but as a body, the church, the new creation. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to breath the church into life and give us the gifts we need to continue God's work of reconciliation. (We will sing the next 3 songs w/out further comment.) Note how each song leads to next and expands the vision of the church.

Holy Spirit: HWB 293 *God's sends us the Spirit*, vs 1 & 3

Church: HWB 304 *There are many gifts*, vs 2 & 3

Church's calling: SJ 61 *How can we be silent*, vs 1, 3, & 4

We wait in hope **for the time when all of creation will be reconciled to God**, and God's kingdom, which is near us and among us and within us, will finally come in all its fullness.

Our hope: HWB 323 *Beyond a dying sun*, vs 1&2

Come, Lord Jesus!

Note: This takes about 25 minutes using this text and verses designated.