

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

Mark 13:28-37 // The Parable of the Fig Tree

This worship service centers on the parable of the fig tree. This passage of scripture tells us to keep alert for when God will break through in the world. Here are some materials to help you create your own worship service.

MAIN THEME: *How do we stay alert to the ways God is working in the world?*

CHOOSING MUSIC // FOR SINGING

- **Everlasting God** [Suggested Key: A]
Text and Music: Brenton Brown and Ken Riley
© 2005 Thankyou Music
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)

- **How Great is Our God** [Suggested Key: A]
Text and Music: Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves, Ed Cash
© 2004 worshiptogether.com songs, sixsteps Music, Wondrously Made Songs
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing, Music Services, Inc.)

- **Hope is Dawning** [Suggested Key: C]
Text and Music: Johnny Parks, Matt Maher, Michael Gungor, Aaron Keyes
© 2010 spiritandsong.com, Thankyou Music, worshiptogether.com songs
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)

- **Take My Life** [Suggested Key: D]
Text and Music: Frances Ridley Havergal, Chris Tomlin, Loui Giglio, Nehri Abraham Cesar Malan
© 2003 sixsteps Music, worshiptogether.com songs
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)

- **Canaan Bound** [Suggested Key: F]
Text and Music: Andrew Peterson
© 2003 Essential Music
Consider learning this song and using it with our guided prayer activity “A Prayer for the Journey.”

CREATING DRAMA // FOR HEARING

Invite someone to read the scripture passage, Mark 13:28-37, multiple times. As you read it, play a video or song that reflects life and growth. We suggested the video loop of a tree coming to life by The Work of the People. You can purchase this loop online at [www.workofthepeople.com.]

FINDING ART // FOR SEEING

One idea is to have worshipers create their own artwork. Before worship, ask an artist to draw or paint a tree on a large piece of paper. Make this artwork interactive by supplying worshipers with post-it notes.

Craft a time in worship where worshipers respond to the parable with a question such as “How do you stay alert to the work of God?” They can write their response on their post-it note and place the note on the tree.

You can also display other artwork like Alexey Pismenny’s painting “Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree” in your worship service. Be sure to ask permission of the artist, display the title of the painting, and the artist’s name if you do.

LIVING WORSHIP // FOR DOING

If you followed our suggestion and used a small living tree with flowers and leaves in your worship space, take it outside and plant it somewhere. Be sure you have permission! Let it stand as a reminder to “keep awake.”

MAKING SPACE // FOR WORSHIPPING

Consider putting a tree, leaves, or branches somewhere in the room. You might want to have a small dead tree without leaves next to a small tree with many leaves or flowers. If you use a real tree with flowers, see our suggestion under “living worship” about planting it with your worshipping community.

WRITING POETRY// FOR PRAYING

Place luggage in the front of the worship space and have worshipers write a letter. This letter might remind them to stay awake to all that God might do in the coming season. See our guided prayer activity “A Prayer for the Journey,” which will help with this. (below)

A PRAYER FOR THE JOURNEY

Materials Needed

- Card or piece of paper
- Envelope
- Writing Utensil
- Space in worship to collect letters

Instructions to be given by leader:

We are going to spend time together in prayer now. You should have received a piece of paper and an envelope when you entered worship. Take those out, and take out something to write with. Let yourself get into a comfortable position. You can stay in your chair, you can kneel beside your chair, or you can walk to another place in the room.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

Get comfortable in your space, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. In just a short time, you will leave this space to begin a new journey. For many of you, this journey will involve transitions and adjustments. Keep breathing deep, and begin thinking about the journey that you will take this year. Think about places that you will go. Anticipate things you will do. Think about people you will encounter. What are you excited about? What are you scared about? What is known to you? What is unknown to you? Where might you most need God to show up? Make a list of these things on one side of your paper.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

Now, think about what you might need to hear from God as you prepare for this journey. And, think about what God might want to say to you as you take this journey. What things might you need to remember for the journey? What things might you need to forget in order to take the journey? What assures you of God's presence in your life as you travel? Make a list of these things on the same side of your paper.

(Allow time for worshipers to follow these instructions)

On the other side of your paper, write a short letter to yourself. In the letter, remind yourself that God will be traveling with you this year, no matter what circumstances you might encounter. When you finish, place the paper in an envelope, seal it, and address it to yourself. Then, bring the letter and place it in the piece of luggage at the front of the worship space.

(Consider playing or performing Andrew Peterson's song, "Canaan Bound" while worshipers complete this activity. Don't rush them. A church leader should collect these letters, place a stamp on them, and mail them about six weeks later.)

SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

Preparing for the Journey // Mark 13:28-37 // The Parable of the Fig Tree

WELCOME

Say hello to other worshipers and welcome them in the name of Christ

SONGS AND STORIES

Begin by singing the chorus of the hymn, *Tell Me the Stories of Jesus*. A few days before worship, invite 2-3 worshipers to prepare brief testimonies completing this statement: "The story of Jesus is a story of ..." Sing the refrain of the hymn between each person's story.

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

[Light a candle to represent the light of Christ]

Leader: The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: **Who made heaven and earth.**

Leader: Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God, for all of life and for our common calling as your servants. We give you thanks for women and men whom you call to be leaders in your church and the world, and for mentors who form them for service. Through our witness and mission, may we encourage the church to join courageously in your work of compassion, mercy, justice, and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

All: **Amen.**

SONGS OF PRAISE

How Great is Our God
How Great Thou Art
Everlasting God

PRAYER OF PRAISE

SONG OF FAITH

Ancient Words

SCRIPTURE READING

The Parable of the Fig Tree // Mark 13:28-37

[Purchase and download the loop "Dead Tree Replaced with Living from The Work of the People. Project this loop onto a screen and invite worshipers to focus on it as the scripture is read. You might even read the scripture passage 2-3 times while the loop plays or focus on one section of the passage to repeat multiple times.]

MESSAGE

SONG OF RESPONSE

Take My Life and Let It Be

PRAYING TOGETHER

"A Prayer for the Journey"

[Each worshiper will need a blank piece of paper, an envelope, and a writing utensil. You will also need space and an object (suitcase) at the front/center of the worship space to collect letters. Download complete instructions in the resource section of The Toolbox on our website.]

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CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, you have called all of us to follow the way of Christ, our Lord and Savior. As we journey away from this place today, surround us with affection and hope. Help us grow in wisdom, mature in love, and continue to be faithful followers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, from whom all good things come. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SENDING

Leader: May the peace of god, which surpasses all

understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

All: Amen.

Leader: Friends, go in peace to love and serve.

All: With God's help, we wil.