



FALL REVIVAL

Sunday, September 29, 2013

Guest Writer for This Unit: Courtney Bryant

Courtney Bryant is an ordained Baptist and doctoral student at Vanderbilt University whose ministry and research focuses on relationality and intimacy with God.

The unit you are viewing, Fall Revival, is a compact unit. This means that it does not have a supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided scriptural text(s) that we suggest for this moment on the calendar along with a sermonic outline, suggested links, books, articles, songs, and videos. For additional information, see Fall Revival and or Revival in the archives of the Lectionary for 2008–2012.

I. Description of the Liturgical Moment

Dr. Luke A. Powery wrote in the 2008 Revival I unit: “The word revival stems from the Latin word *revivere* which means to live again.” This definition implies that something has died.

Fall signals the death of all the abundance of summer. The blossoms are long gone, and even the spectacle of leaves in fanciful colors ends with their departure from their branches. Days adorned with warm gentle breezes now grow colder and shorter. Gone are the relaxed moments of picnics

in the park, playtime at the pool, ice cream and lemonade and summers in the South with family. Fall heralds the hustle and bustle of school and work. It is a time of work, the time of the harvest where humankind prepares for the starkness of winter. Fall could stand as a metaphorical representation of our spiritual journey with God. The beginnings of the experience are like summer, ripe with the fullness of encountering God for the first time, yet as our relationship grows, those mountaintop moments can seem fewer and far between.

Liturgically the possibilities of fall are limited. Pastors cannot take advantage of the romance of Advent as we await the birth of our Savior, and cannot capitalize on the sobriety and sacredness of the Lenten season leading up to the passion of Christ and Resurrection Sunday. If anything, like the adolescence of our faith walk, it is a time of working, waiting, and in some case mourning the abundance and newness of intimacy with God. During this time, something in the spirit grows dim. Sometimes it is hope or joy that has died; other times it is the excitement that accompanies novelty. With minds fixed on tasks or lamenting the freedom and frivolity of summer, the fall revival calls the spirit to remembrance of who God is and that we are called to life and life more abundantly. For one week, the Church assembles the community, churched and unchurched, to introduce to some and reintroduce to others the wealth of the Spirit and to renew and refocus themselves as God's people.

II. Fall Revival Sermon Outline

A. Sermonic Focus Text: Habakkuk 3:2-13

(v. 2) O LORD, I have heard of your renown, and I stand in awe, O LORD, of your work. In our own time revive it; in our own time make it known; in wrath may you remember mercy. (v. 3) God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah* His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. (v. 4) The brightness was like the sun; rays came forth from his hand, where his power lay hidden. (v. 5) Before him went pestilence, and plague followed close behind. (v. 6) He stopped and shook the earth; he looked and made the nations tremble. The eternal mountains were shattered; along his ancient pathways the everlasting hills sank low. (v. 7) I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction; the tent-curtains of the land of Midian trembled. (v. 8) Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Or your anger against the rivers, or your rage against the sea, when you drove your horses, your chariots to victory? (v. 9) You brandished your naked bow, sated were the arrows at your command. *Selah* You split the earth with rivers. (v. 10) The mountains saw you, and writhed; a torrent of water swept by; the deep gave forth its voice. The sun raised high its hands; (v. 11) the moon stood still in its exalted place, at the light of your arrows speeding by, at the gleam of your flashing spear. (v. 12) In fury you trod the earth, in anger you trampled nations. (v. 13) You came forth to save your people, to save your anointed. You crushed the head of the wicked house, laying it bare from foundation to roof. *Selah*

B. Possible Titles

- i. Revived through Remembering
- ii. That's the Glory of Love

iii. Allegiance to the Almighty

C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry

In any text there can be several words or phrases that require significant exegetical inquiry. One exegetical inquiry raised by this text is the fact that the prophet expects the wrath of God, for he says, "...in wrath may you remember mercy." What does it mean for the people of God to expect both wrath and to ask for mercy amidst it?

III. Introduction

There is no limit to the lengths God will go to demonstrate God's love to us. The book of Habakkuk depicts the people of God after they have been captured by the Babylonians. God sent the Babylonians because God's people had become ungodly idol-worshippers. They were taken into Babylonian captivity for seventy years and an entire generation was wiped out. Yet the people were not completely destroyed. The Prophet Habakkuk prays for God to act, to employ some of the awesome power God was known for on behalf of Israel.

What a strange predicament, to be held in captivity when the Lord of the universe is supposed to be your shield. However, the people of Israel had become a stubborn and forgetful people. Caught up in their revelry, they forgot who they were and who God was.

We can all lose credibility as the body of Christ, getting distracted by the cares of the world and enticed by the world's way of doing things. However, forgiveness is still possible. No matter how deviant one's life has been, no matter how monstrous, no matter how carnal, sad, and hypocritical, there is forgiveness with God who anxiously waits for the opportunity to be merciful to God's children. God pledges to every soul that comes to him through Jesus Christ, even at the eleventh hour, "I will be your God and you will be my people." Upon that commitment, God never goes back. The word says "nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 8:39), for everyone who confesses his sins and comes in faith to Jesus Christ for salvation, God will not cast them out.

Habakkuk cries out repentant for the people, urgently pleading for God to remember mercy and to revive the people. Not in the next generation, but now. Habakkuk reminds the Lord of the covenant in desperation, but God never forgets the covenant. It is we who forget. Hence the passage rehearses the greatness of God and the measures God takes to come to the rescue and aid of his people; this is a great way of reviving those who have forgotten God's never-ending love.

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point One – Humans are forgetful and easily distracted, causing the need for revival.

a. The beginnings of our walk with the Lord, and the high points of our Christian journey, are exciting, but like most relationships, they can hit plateaus and we can become bored with the

monotony. Other times we are disappointed, thinking that because we are Christians things should always go the way we expect. When we don't get the things we want, at the time that we want them, we entertain other powers the same way the Israelites did.

b. This makes us vulnerable to seeking answers, thrills, and excitement in things that are not edifying or beneficial to the kingdom of God.

c. Before we know it we are enmeshed in an alternate way of being, the things of God no longer seem a priority, and we become negligent of our relationship with the Lord.

Move/Point Two – Regardless of our failings, God delights in the opportunity to use all of God's power to rescue the people of God.

a. While they were in Babylonian captivity, God never stopped caring about the children of God.

b. When Habakkuk cries out to the Lord, despite the checkered past of the nation, God comes to their aid.

c. God's assistance is extravagant. The dramatic nature of God's presence and the assault of Israel's enemies is a testament of the breath of God's concern for their well-being.

Move/Point Three – Remembering God's faithfulness revives the people and moves them to faithfulness themselves.

a. Habakkuk calls us to *Selah*, to pause and calmly think about what has been said. Doing this gives believers an opportunity to consider God's actions so that we might remember God's faithfulness.

b. When we consider what God has done for us in the past, we cannot help but be moved to gratefulness and a new understanding of how precious we are in God's sight.

c. God's glory and greatness are constantly working on our behalf, moving obstacles out of the way, even our own unfaithfulness.

Celebration

God's love for God's children endures forever. It never fails. Even after Israel had been unfaithful, worshipping idols, God still came to its rescue, proving that forgiveness and reconciliation are always available when we call upon God. God is constantly trying to motivate us to remembrance by reminding us who God is. God leaves a fingerprint of God's love so that we can never forget, and even when we do, God sends messengers to remind us. Even in our forgetfulness and distraction, God is always out doing God's self to get our attention. This moves us to become new creatures and to try again. God literally calls us to remembrance through acts of protection, salvation, and forgiveness so that we can be revived by the depth and magnitude of his love!

V. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in This Passage

The descriptive details in this passage include but are not limited to:

Sounds: The earth praising God; rays coming forth from the sun; God shaking the earth; the nations trembling; eternal mountains shattering; the earth being split with rivers; a torrent of water sweeping by; the deep-giving forth its voice; the speed of God's arrows; God trampling nations;

Sights: God's glory covering the heavens; the earth praising God; God's brightness being like the sun; rays coming forth from the hand of God; pestilence coming before God and plague following close behind; eternal mountains shattering; everlasting hills sinking low; the earth being split with rivers; the mountains seeing God and writhing; the sun raising high its hands; the moon standing still in its exalted place; God's speeding arrows and flashing spear; and

Colors: Gleaming gold as the sun raises both its hands and the glory of God covers the heavens; shocking whites at the gleam of the flashing spear; and earthy browns and foreboding blacks as the mountains are shattered and Midian trembles.

VI. Illustration(s)

Sheets Tied to Trees

There was a widowed mother with five children. Her oldest boy was very rebellious and constantly disobeyed her rules. The two eventually had a terrible argument and the mother told him he could either abide by her rules or leave her house. The boy grabbed his clothes and left.

For a while, he enjoyed being away from home. He had a well-paying job that enabled him to have money, friends, nice clothes, and a decent place to live. But a few months later a recession hit and he lost his job and everything else. Out of desperation, he sent an email to his mother that explained his situation. He told her he had no job, money, or food. He also said he was sorry and that he would jump on a train tomorrow that was headed towards home; the tracks ran behind the backyard of their house. If his mom forgave him and would allow him to come back home, he asked that she tie a white rag on the oak tree as a sign that she had forgiven him.

The next morning the young man jumped on a train. He was in a car with some other guys who snuck on. As the train approached his backyard, he told the guy next to him his story and asked him to look out and see if a white rag was tied to a tree. As the train moved around the curve the man said, "I don't see a rag on a tree, but I do see sheets, white sheets all over the yard."

Does that not sound like God? We've messed up in a big way; we sinned. But God showed us he forgave us when he tied all of God to a tree.

—George Champion, *100 Illustrations for Preaching and Speaking*
(Orlando, FL: Self-published, 2001), 52–53.

VIII. Songs to Accompany This Sermon

A. Well-known Song(s)

- Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing. Traditional
- At the Revival. By Curtis Fullard and Roy Tyler
- God’s Love. By Lisa Vischer

B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2012)

- Indescribable. By Jesse Reeves and Laura Story
- Prodigal Son. By Tye Tribbett
- Faithful Is Our God. By Jules Bartholomew

C. Congregational Song(s)

- Breathe on Me, Breath of God. By Edwin Hatch. Tune by Robert Jackson
- Come and Go with Me. Traditional. Arr. by Marilyn E. Thornton
- Renew Thy Church, Her Ministries Restore. By Kenneth L. Cober
- I Give All to You. By Larnelle Harris. Arr. by William S. Moon

D. Liturgical Dance Music

- Give Me a Clean Heart. By Darryl Dixon, Noel Hall, and Fred Hammond
- He’s Gonna Come Through. By Smokie Norful and Tye Tribbett

E. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer

- We Must Praise. By James Moss
- Worship the King. By Cheryl Fortune, James Fortune, and AyRon Lewis

F. Sermonic Selection(s)

- I Will Rejoice. By William Murphy
- I Choose to Worship. By Joseph Morgan and Wess Morgan

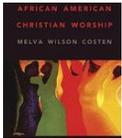
G. Benediction Song(s)

- I'll Hold On. By Jerome Armstrong, Terrance Battle, Michael Bethany, King Logan, Reggie Miller, and Michael White
- It's about Time for a Miracle. By Samuel L. Butts

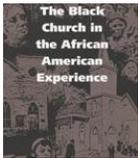
IX. Videos, Audio, and/or Interactive Media

- “The Reviving Power of God’s Word,” by Senate Chaplain Barry Black. Online location: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geiAEy_JMVo (accessed 29 May 2013).
- Old Revival Medley. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCCdwBfJaEU> (accessed 29 May 2013).
- “Send a Revival Lord,” by Willie Neal Johnson & the New Gospel Keynotes. Online location: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjllpW-3vNc> (accessed 29 May 2013).

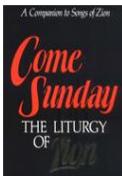
X. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons, Bible Studies, and/or Worship Services Related to Revival



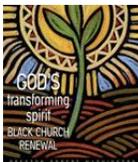
Costen, Melva Wilson. African American Christian Worship. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993.



Lincoln, Eric C. The Black Church in the African American Experience. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990.



McClain, William B. Come Sunday: The Liturgy of Zion. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990.



Washington, Preston. God's Transforming Spirit: Black Church Renewal. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988.

XII. Notes for Select Songs

A. Well-known Song(s)

- Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing. Traditional
Location:
Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing: American Folk Hymns & Spirituals. Salt Lake City, UT: Mormon Tabernacle, 2009.
- At the Revival. By Curtis Fullard and Roy Tyler
Location:
The Mighty Clouds of Joy. At the Revival. Brentwood, TN: EMI Music, 2010.
- God's Love. By Lisa Vischer
Location:
VeggieTales. 25 Favorite Sunday School Songs. Winona, MN: Big Idea, 2009.

B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2012)

- Indescribable. By Jesse Reeves and Laura Story
Location:
Sheard, Kierra. Free. Brentwood, TN: EMI, 2011.
- Prodigal Son. By Tye Tribbett
Location:
Playlist: The Very Best of Tye Tribbett & G.A. New York, NY: Columbia, 2012.
- Faithful Is Our God. By Jules Bartholomew
Location:
Walker, Hezekiah & The Love Fellowship Crusade Choir. 20/85 the Experience. New York, NY: EMI, 2005.

C. Congregational Song(s)

- Breathe on Me, Breath of God. By Edwin Hatch. Tune by Robert Jackson
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #317
- Come and Go with Me. Traditional. Arr. by Marilyn E. Thornton
Location:

Zion Still Sings for Every Generation. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. #122

- Renew Thy Church, Her Ministries Restore. By Kenneth L. Cober
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #343
- I Give All to You. By Larnelle Harris. Arr. by William S. Moon
Location:
Zion Still Sings. #101

D. Liturgical Dance Music

- Give Me a Clean Heart. By Darryl Dixon, Noel Hall, and Fred Hammond
Location:
Hammond, Fred. The Essential Fred Hammond. New York, NY: Legacy, 2007.
- He's Gonna Come Through. By Smokie Norful and Tye Tribett
Location:
Norful, Smokie. Live. Nashville, TN: CMG, 2009.

E. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer

- We Must Praise. By James Moss
Location:
Top 25 Gospel Praise & Worship Songs: 2011 Edition. San Clemente, CA: Genesis, 2003.
- Worship the King. By Cheryl Fortune, James Fortune, and AyRon Lewis
Location:
Fortune, James & FIYA. Grace Gift 1. Nashville, TN: Light Records, 2012.

F. Sermonic Selection(s)

- I Will Rejoice. By William Murphy
Location:
The Sound. Nashville, TN: Central South Music, 2007.
- I Choose to Worship. By Joseph Morgan and Wess Morgan
Location:
Morgan, Wess. Under an Open Heaven, Vol. 1. Hendersonville, TN: Bowtie World Music, 2010.

G. Benediction Song(s)

- I'll Hold On. By Jerome Armstrong, Terrance Battle, Michael Bethany, King Logan, Reggie Miller, and Michael White
Location:
Mann, Tamela. Best Days. Cedar Hill, TX: Tilly Mann, 2012.
- It's about Time for a Miracle. By Samuel L. Butts
Location:
Crawford, Beverly. Live from Los Angeles, Vol. 2. Los Angeles, CA: JDI Records , 2010.