

Worship Date: June 13, 2010

Worship Theme: Go In Peace

Scripture Reference: Luke 7:36-8:3

Materials: small pillow, comb, glass of water, dish towel or wash cloth

Once there was a group of children in the same youth group at church. Most of the kids were really good and well behaved at church. But there was one kid, Billy, who was the terror of the whole group. When it was time for praise music, all the kids sang nicely and played their percussion instruments in time to the beat of the music. But not Billy. He would pick the loudest instrument he could find (a drum or the cymbals) and he would yell out the words to the song, stomp his feet, and play totally off beat. Everyone would glare at Billy. Some even rolled their eyes at how he misbehaved. When someone went to go back to the bathroom, Billy would wait until the door closed and he would hold the door from the outside so the person couldn't get out. The person would bang on the door and yell, "Help!", but Billy just grinned and held onto the door handle tighter. When the kids would go outside to play, Billy would always try to take the football or basketball and run away with it. Sometimes he would throw rocks at the girls sitting outside in the gazebo.

One day during the praise music at church, a man walked in and sat in one of the back rows. His hair wasn't combed and his clothes were not nice and clean like the clothes everybody else wore to church. They looked like they had dirt or grease on them. His face looked sweaty and a little dirty like he had walked to church. While Billy had been running around the church beating the drum, he had seen the man come in. Billy watched the man for a little while wondering why he looked so strange. A few other people noticed the man, but after they saw his clothes and his hair, they tried to pretend they didn't see him. They all just went on singing.

Billy put his drum down and ran back to the kitchen at the church. He grabbed a plastic cup out of the cabinet and filled it with ice from the freezer and water from the faucet. Then he grabbed a clean dish towel from one of the drawers and ran it under the cool water in the faucet. Then he stopped in the nursery to get a small pillow. He took the glass of water and the wet dish towel to the man. The man smiled at Billy and took the glass of water and began drinking. When he was finished, he took the wet dish towel and wiped his face and hands and wiped some of the dirt off his clothes. Then Billy took a comb out of his pocket and handed it to the man so he could comb his hair. Billy took the glass and the dish towel and put them back in the kitchen and came back and sat next to the man during the service. Billy gave the man the pillow to put behind his back so he

would be more comfortable. Billy showed him the bulletin with the Order of Worship and helped him to find the songs in the right song book. He also handed him the scriptures at the appropriate time and helped the man find his place so he could follow along as the speaker preached.

When it came time to take up the offering, instead of putting money in the plate, the man began to stand up. He got the attention of the person in charge of the service and asked if he could offer thanks to God. The person in charge nodded her head “yes”. The man began to explain that he supposed to preach at a church in a town about 10 miles away. He was on his way to church when his car broke down. He tried to fix the car, but couldn’t get it running again. He decided to try to find help, so he stopped in a church just a couple of blocks down the road. He explained how the deacon had stopped him at the door and told him that he wouldn’t be allowed to come inside since he was so dirty. He had walked a little further and had come upon this church. He had walked into the sanctuary hoping to get the attention of someone who could help him. But everyone pretended not to notice he was there. Everyone except this boy sitting next to him. All the people in the church turned around to see who the boy was. When some of the people saw him, they gasped. Others’ eyes got really big, or they just shook their heads. Billy? They found it hard to believe. After all, he’s the bad kid. Always disrupting the service and being mean to or teasing the other kids. The man went on to explain how no one else had offered him anything to drink or a towel to wipe his hands and face, yet Billy had done those things. He had even offered the man his comb and had sat with him throughout the service so he wouldn’t feel like a stranger. The man put his hand on Billy’s shoulder and told him that God was very pleased with how he had behaved that Sunday. He also went on to say that God forgave Billy for being such a bad kid and that God needed Billy to help Him help other people in the world. The man told Billy, “Go in Peace”.

For the first time in his life, Billy felt like he had a purpose. He grinned a big grin and had a feeling of happiness through his whole body. The church group never saw the stranger again, but from that day forward, Billy would help the deacons during the church service. He always greeted strangers and helped them feel welcome in the church.

So what do you think happened to Billy to make him change? (he was forgiven for being bad and felt he had a purpose). Do you think we can learn something from Billy? (welcome others and help them feel at home when they visit our church)

Would you pray with me? “Dear God, Thank you for forgiving us for the bad things we do. Help us to be like Billy and welcome others to our church. Help us to see their needs and meet those needs. Help us to find our purpose in Your Kingdom. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.”