



## Worship Resources for *Steeple's Ad Run* – Fall 2008

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**Psalm 137:4-9**

### **How Can We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land?**

Like many, I have just about given up on diversity. I see the lists of guests at my son's wedding and can't believe my world, once so colorful, is now so white. I overhear the deep national conversation about race and gender and who likes whom and is like who – and feel like I am living in an echo chamber. "Been there, done that," I try to say, but the truth is that "been there undone that" is more accurate.

You could say I am close to giving up my harp. I dare say God understands. Rainbow has been offered so often – and denied with such vigor. I may think I live in appreciation deficit disorder – where my best efforts were either not noticed or considered dumb or I just plain failed – but God has a long-term lease on that building. God understands what it is like to fail and not even be thanked for trying.

Strange songs in a stranger land have punctured my bulletproof vest. I long for the ping of Jesus Crystal in my life, my land, at my son's wedding. Instead I sing a strange song in a strange land – and thank God I am joined not only to God but also to thousands like me. I am not the only one afraid. I am not the only one who knows life is too short to be white but live in a colorless exile anyway. I am one of all the people. Not the best nor the worst, not the top nor the bottom, not so much privileged for merit as privileged as part of the whole. Sometimes I melt, just knowing that I am one of us. I am still here, with you, all the people.

What keeps me going is what keeps God going. Both nature and city remind me of how beautiful it is all supposed to be – and will be in the heaven on earth that is promised even to strangers in strange lands. The cry of the loon, the whisper of the prairie, the chatter of the frogs, the bite of the bug join the Trinity in Coltrane, the kids on the corner, the mothers in the park, the hockey Moms, the soccer moms, the community organizers, the pit bulls wearing make up, and bee ba ba rooba rhubarb pie – the whole big fat silly mess that constitute nature and history, you and me, us and them to make both God and us glad.

By the way there is no us and them. At a certain level we are all strangers in a strange land until we come into the new time, heaven on earth, promised to be here, now, not later then. Sure there are some punishmentalists who imagine heaven is for later and hell is for now. Those of us touched by Jesus, the heaven to earth, spirit to flesh, eternity to time, God to human understand what the Lord's prayer really means: that we are to drag heaven to earth for all people, even ourselves. There is no heaven OR earth, us OR them. These ideas are the strangers, not us.

When I leave for work today, don't let me forget my harp. With all of us, I want to sing, even if it is, a while longer till we get over ourselves. I'll even sing a strange song in a strange land.

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In the name of the people of Seattle, North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Maine, New York, DC, Winnipeg, Lawndale, LA and Montana, in the name of "ATM" immigrants who were robbed on the way home today, in the name of white women having pedicures with Chinese women bent over them, in the name of stockbrokers and corporate executives, in the name of drug addicts, in the name of storefront churches, in the name of Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, and everybody in between and over against,

In your name, Blessed Whole Making Creator God

And in the name of your Son, who as a parable of God for humanity is without parallel.  
Amen.