Worship Resources for October 25th, 2020—Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Deuteronomy 34:1-12 and Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17; Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 and Psalm 1; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Matthew 22:34-46

Narrative Lectionary: God’s Promise to David, 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (Luke 1:30-33)

The first selection of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Revised Common Lectionary has followed the ancestors of our faith, through the family and descendants of Abraham and Sarah to their time in Egypt, the Exodus, and emergence in the wilderness as a new people of God. As we near the end of this season in a few weeks, the readings turn toward reminders to the people that they are the ones to carry on the legacy, the relationship with God. In Deuteronomy 34:1-12, God reminded Moses of all the promises made to his ancestors and to the people before him, and then Moses died. The people remembered and wept for Moses, for there had been no other prophet like him, no one else who knew God face to face. Joshua would now lead the people into the land promised them, for Joshua had been anointed by Moses and was full of God’s wisdom. The people gave thanks for Moses, as they prepared to enter the land of their future hope.

Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17 sings of how God has always been there, before time began, and is the one who brings the people back to dust. God’s time is not our own time, a thousand years are like an hour at night. The psalmist pleads with God to turn back to the people and have compassion on their suffering. Often attributed to Moses, this psalm concludes with calling for God’s blessing to be upon the people who have suffered, that they might see God’s work at hand and know days of gladness.

The second selection of the Hebrew Scriptures comes from Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18. This portion of the law called upon the people to be holy as God is holy, and to live into justice. The people are called not to take advantage of their neighbors, not to slander them, and not to hate them; instead, they are called to love their neighbor as themselves.

The book of Psalms begins with a psalm that speaks of the blessings for those who live into God’s ways. This psalm of wisdom refers to those who takes joy in God’s law. They are like trees whose roots are near streams of water, and in all they do, they prosper, and their leaves do not wither. For those not rooted in God’s ways, they are blown away like chaff in the wind, with no roots. The wicked will not stand in time of judgment; they will fall, for God is with the righteous.

Paul writes about his ministry in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8. He reminds the Thessalonians of his early days of ministry, which included a time in Philippi (well before he wrote the letter to the Philippians) when Paul and his companions suffered insults. Paul writes that what he and his companions preach of is not based on false motivations, but simply the truth, the Good News. Paul and his companions didn’t come seeking worldly praise or flattery, but simply to care for them and share the Good News with them.

Jesus was once again challenged about his authority by those around him in Matthew 22:34-46. When a lawyer asked a question to test him about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus answered with two: the Shema (call to prayer) of Deuteronomy 6:4 to love God with our whole being, and Leviticus 19:18 about loving our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus declared that this is the meaning of Scripture (the law and the prophets was widely accepted as canon by the time of Jesus). Jesus then poses a question back to them: whose son is the Messiah? Jesus quotes from Psalm 110, and claims that the Messiah cannot be the son of David, if David calls the Messiah, the anointed king, Lord. The Messiah must be more than what David was. No one asked him any more questions after that.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on God’s Promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. David the king had an idea and told the prophet Nathan that he wanted to build a house for God, for David lived in a cedar palace, but the ark of God still resided in a tent. At first, Nathan told David to do what he was thinking, because God was with him, but then God came to Nathan in a dream. David was not to be the one who built a temple for God, for God had never lived in a temple, and had never asked for it. Instead, God told Nathan to tell David that God would make David’s name great, and would establish David’s kingdom through his descendant. David’s son would be the one to build the temple, and David’s throne would be established forever because of God’s faithfulness.

In Luke 1:30-33, the angel Gabriel told Mary that God was blessing her with a child, who would be called Son of the Most High. This son would be given the throne of David and would rule over the house of Jacob forever.

An overarching theme of the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary and the Narrative Lectionary for this Sunday is the theme of God’s promises that endure forever. God made a promise to Abraham and Sarah and continued to fulfill it through the children of Jacob. God continued to fulfill the promise through Moses, leading the people to the land they had dreamed of, and then anointing Joshua to carry on after Moses’ death. God continued to fulfill the promise through David and Solomon. For Christians, we believe the fulfillment of God’s promises is found in Jesus Christ, and lives in us. God’s steadfast love endures forever. God’s promises are contained in the commandments to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. This is the fulfillment of the covenant for us: to love one another.

Call to Worship

**God of our ancestors made a promise, long ago;**

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

**God is made known to us through Christ Jesus our Lord,**

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

**God continues to be revealed through the Holy Spirit,**

**God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

**Come! May we worship God, who was, and who is, and who is to come,**

**The Almighty, whose love endures forever.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy One, we confess that we have failed to remember Your covenant with us. We turn from Your ways to the ways of this world we created, seeking selfish gain. We forget to love our neighbors and simply tolerate them, if that. We complain and quarrel and are bitter. We at times fail to believe that You are still at work in our world. Forgive us for our faithlessness. Forgive us for not trusting in You. Forgive us for not living into Your ways of love, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Call us back into repentance, into Your way, Your truth, and Your life for us, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Listen! God is calling your name. God knows the hairs on your head. God knows your heart. Listen! Hear the Good News: God’s love endures forever. There is nothing you can do to separate you from God’s love. There is nowhere you can go where God cannot find you! Listen! Turn back to God, and know God’s love has always been with you, is with you now, and will lead you home. Amen.

Prayer

Alpha and Omega, You are the one who makes all things new. As seasons come to an end, You turn the wheel and the new season begins. Guide us in this time of seasonal change in our lives, on the earth, and in our world. May the new season bring for us a hope for peace, a hope for justice. May the new season cause us to change our ways to live into Your hope for us. May we not despair because of the world humanity created, but may we rejoice because You are our Creator. You made the heavens and earth, and You make all things new. Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, may we know a new beginning in You, in this moment, in the now. Amen.