Worship Resources for January 12th, 2020—Baptism of the Lord Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

Narrative Lectionary: Jesus Heals and Teaches, Mark 2:1-22 (Psalm 103:6-14)

Isaiah sings of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 42:1-9. The people of Israel are personified as the Suffering Servant, one who pursues and brings justice to the nations. God has taken the people by the hand, leading them out of exile, and given them a covenant. God is calling them to be a light to the nations, a light for prisoners led out of the darkness of dungeons—a light for those who have suffered in exile. New things are springing forth, and God is declaring them to the people.

The psalmist calls the people to worship in a litany in Psalm 29. The psalmist begins by calling the heavenly beings into worship, then sings of God’s voice, which is full of power and majesty. “The voice of the Lord is over the waters”—a reminder that in the very first act of creation, the voice of God came over the waters of the deep and called forth light. The voice of the Lord brought forth creation, and the voice of the Lord crashes against the people’s enemies. The psalmist uses these images of fearful awe, meant to inspire, that God is mighty and powerful, and God reigns forever. The psalmist concludes by asking God to bless the people with strength and peace.

Peter’s bold declaration of faith in Acts 10:34-43 occurs after he beholds a vision and meets Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who seeks to follow Jesus. Peter recognizes that God has called all peoples of all nations, and declares the Gospel, that Jesus Christ is Lord of All. Peter speaks of Jesus, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he ministered with healing to the people. Peter tells of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and that Jesus commanded those who witnessed his resurrection to continue to share the Gospel. Peter concludes that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ will have forgiveness of sins.

Jesus came to John the Baptist in Matthew 3:13-17 to be baptized in the river Jordan, but John tries to prevent him, believing that Jesus ought to be the one to baptize him. Jesus declares that he needs to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. Once Jesus is baptized, the Spirit descends like a dove upon him, and a voice from heaven declares that Jesus is the Son, the Beloved, and God is well pleased with them.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on Jesus’ healing and teaching in Mark 2:1-22. Jesus returns to Capernaum, and so many come to see him that there is no room. Friends of a paralytic manage to climb onto the roof, cut a hole and let their friend in so Jesus can heal him. Jesus told him, “Your sins are forgiven,” and some of the religious leaders questioned in their hearts what Jesus was doing, thinking he was blaspheming. Jesus asks them why they are questioning him in their hearts, instead of accepting the witness of what he was doing—that the healings themselves are proof that what Jesus came from God. Later, Jesus left there to go by the sea and continue to preach and teach—and he called Levi, a tax collector, to follow him. Some of the religious leaders can’t believe he’d eat with a tax collector—a sinner—but Jesus declared he came not for the righteous, but for sinners. For those who are in need of healing need a physician, not those who are well.

The secondary reading continues in Psalm 103, with verses 6-14. God made the commandments known through Moses, and God works for those who are oppressed. God is merciful and compassionate and does not repay us for our wrongdoing; instead, God’s steadfast love is always with us, and God forgives us of our sins.

God is doing something new through Jesus Christ. God is leading us in a new way of love. Our baptism is a reminder of a new beginning with God, and that Jesus has lived the same journey we live, facing temptation and living into the fullness of this life. God is leading us a in a new way, calling us to seek forgiveness and healing rather than judgment and retribution. This is hard work, but Christ has called us to this Good News, and is with us in the journey.

Call to Worship (from Isaiah 42:6-9)

God called you in righteousness, taking you by the hand;

**God has given us a covenant, and made us a light to all people.**

God called you to bring out those who dwell in darkness;

**For the Lord is our God, and God’s glory is given to us.**

See, the former things have come to pass, and God declares new things:

**Before they spring forth, God speaks them to us.**

Come, worship God, who makes all things new:

**Worship God, who is with us in the journey of life.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Creator God, we confess that at times it is hard to see how anything good is happening in the world. At times, we dwell in spiritual blankness, a void in which we do not see light, do not see color, do not see the brightness and hope that You bring. Call us into Your perception: to hold on to every good deed, every beautiful thing, every joyful moment. Open our hearts to Your steadfast love that penetrates the void. Guide us into the work of justice, to restore what has been taken, repair what has been broken, heal what has been harmed. Help us to not only shine Your light, but to become Your light to the world. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God is making all things new. The past is in the past, all that we can look forward to is a new future with hope. You are God’s beloved. God’s love is always with you. You are forgiven. Begin a new moment with God, and all the moments to come are new. God is seeking to repair the world, and You are part of that work. Go and share the good news, and bring healing and hope with you along the journey. Amen.

Prayer

God Who Speaks, speak to us in a new way, that we might listen for Your call above the noise of the world. Cry out to us, that we would hear the call of justice amidst the distractions of daily life. Sing out to us, that we would hear Your music and feel Your rhythm against the despairing notes that drag us down. Whisper to us, that we would hear the words of Your steadfast love spoken softly and tenderly in our hearts. Call our names. Speak to us, O God, and help us to learn Your words, Your rhythm, Your song. Amen.