Worship Resources for January 14, 2017—Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 3:1-20; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

Narrative Lectionary: Wedding at Cana, John 2:1-11 (Psalm 104:14-16)

The boy Samuel, whose mother was Hannah (in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 she sings her song, which is similar to Mary’s Magnificat from Luke 1:46-55, which we read only a few weeks ago in Advent), was being raised in the temple by the priest Eli. Samuel hears the voice of God, but assumes it is Eli who is calling for him. It takes Eli a while, but Eli is able to discern that it is God who is calling the boy, and he tells Samuel to respond affirmatively to God. God tells Samuel that he is about to do something that will make the ears of anyone who hears it tingle. God does not have good news for Eli and his family, for Eli’s sons have blasphemed God and have served corruptly, but when Samuel delivers the message, Eli accepts the word of God. As Samuel grew up, God’s words were with him, and the people trusted him as a prophet of the Lord.

The psalmist delivers this beautiful song of how God knows us intimately in psalm 139. God is the one who formed us in our mother’s womb. God is beyond our understanding, yet understands us, and knows us better than anyone else. God beheld us unformed before our creation, and at the end, we are still with God.

Paul speaks to the church in Corinth that has experienced much division and corruption. In 6:12-20, Paul is addressing a sensitive matter—back in chapter five, Paul mentions that he has heard that there is a member who has taken up with his stepmother. Paul is concerned about sexual relationships in this church that has seemed to accept a number of practices from their old pagan ways. In the Greek culture in Corinth, there were ritual prostitutes who served at the pagan temples. Whether or not members of the church are actually sleeping with these prostitutes, Paul explains that they need to shun this way of being, that their bodies are part of Christ, and when they worship other gods it is an act of spiritual prostitution, as much as it is when they are caught up in these sexual practices. Paul is more strict on matters of sexual morality in his letter to the Corinthians than in other places because of this context, and the member in chapter five who was sleeping with his father’s wife.

John 1:43-51 shares the calling of Philip and Nathanael as disciples. Andrew and Simon Peter were called by Jesus, and Philip was from their same town. After Philip was called by Jesus to follow him, Philip went and found Nathanael, who shared his doubts of whether anything good could come out of Nazareth. But Philip persuades Nathanael to come see Jesus, and when Jesus sees him, he tells Nathanael how he saw him under the fig tree. When Nathanael declares that Jesus is truly the Son of God, Jesus tells him he will see greater things than this.

The Narrative Lectionary moves to the Wedding at Cana in John 2:1-11. Another story that is often read in the Epiphany Season, Jesus has attended a wedding with his mother and with his disciples. For some reason, there is not enough wine at the wedding and they have run short. Jesus’ mother is concerned, but Jesus tells her not to be concerned, it is not his time yet, but he tells the servants to fill the jugs with water, and when the steward tastes it, it has turned to wine. It would have been disgraceful for the wine to run out, a sign of bad luck, but through Jesus’ intervention on behalf of his mother, instead the best wine is brought forth. This is the first of Jesus’ miracles, and further reveals his glory to the disciples.

Psalm 104:14-16 speaks of God’s abundance in creation, and how God has provided food for all the people and all creatures of the earth. Specifically, verse 15 speaks of wine to gladden the human heart. While other plants are provided for people and creatures, and water for all of the plant life, wine was made specifically for human enjoyment.

God calls us to speak and be in solidarity against injustice, and it is not always easy. Some will reject us. Sometimes we are the ones who do the rejecting. But in the case of Nathanael, sometimes we need to listen and give the other the benefit of the doubt. In the case of Eli, sometimes we need to accept that the words we hear are not the message we thought we would receive. But in all cases, we are fearfully and wonderfully made and God has made us with the intention of good work. And as with the wedding in Cana, God has made us to enjoy this life and this world. Too often, we think of enjoyment as something in the next life, that we need to work hard in this lifetime. Too often, we think that others suffering will be rewarded in the afterlife. But Christ has called us to new life now. We are called to work for justice, and that means at times working so that others might find enjoyment, too. Working to bring a smile on someone’s face who has been downhearted. When we do this work for others, we often find enjoyment for ourselves. The writer of Ecclesiastes, in 3:13-14, states that it is God’s gift that we find pleasure in our work, eat and drink and enjoy what we can. And we do that best by making sure others are able to find enjoyment.

Call to Worship (from Ecclesiastes 3: 10-14; Psalm 139:14)

God has made everything suitable for its time;

 **God has made us, and we are fearfully and wonderfully made.**

God has given us a sense of past, present, and future;

 **Yet what we know is so small, compared to the infinite wisdom of God.**

It is God’s gift that we find peace and joy in this lifetime;

 **For whatever God does endures forever.**

Come before God with awe and wonder,

 **Worship God, who has given us eternal life.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we do not listen well. We make assumptions, we interject and interrupt, and do not understand what others are going through. We dismiss other’s pain. We make judgments based on our own experience and not the experience of others. Forgive us for not being silent when another shares their pain. Forgive us for not having empathy. Forgive us for trying to be quick to fix as well as quick to judge, instead of listening with compassion. Call us into Your ways of loving-kindness, mercy, and justice that is restorative instead of retributive. In the name of Christ, who is calling us—may we listen to that call. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God is still calling your name. Even if you have ignored God, turned away, or failed to even notice, God is still calling your name. Listen to the call of God. Turn away from the ways of this world that lead to evil, and turn instead to the ways of God: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. You are forgiven and restored. Listen to God calling your name, and follow. Amen.

Prayer

In this world of disharmony, tune our hearts to You, O God. In this time of discord, tune our hearts to You, O God. Help us to find the melody You sing, and help us to find our ways to harmonize, and bring beauty and peace to this world. We do not all have to sing the same note, but help us to find Your rhythm, and make music that brings joy to this world. Conduct us, O God, so that we might follow You, find our place, and do our part. In Your name we pray. Amen.