Worship Resources for January 17th, 2016—Second Sunday after Epiphany

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Narrative Lectionary: Parables in Mark, Mark 4:1-34 (Psalm 126)

The prophet Isaiah compares the people to the bride of God as they return from exile in chapter 62. Continuing on the theme from Epiphany, nations are drawn to the light of the people who have remained faithful to God through all they have been through, and they have seen the assurance of God’s promises lived out. God rejoices in their faithfulness, and others will see the blessings of God because of their perseverance.

Psalm 36:5-10 sings of God’s faithfulness and steadfast love. The people find safety and security, life and salvation, in God. Through God’s light, they see light (vs. 9). The light of God shines for all to see, and they see God’s abundant love and grace.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 begins Paul’s discourse on the diversity of spiritual gifts, and the oneness of the body of Christ. There are different gifts and abilities, but all are given by the same Spirit. The Spirit of God works in each of us differently, and the Spirit chooses our gifts individually for us, but to work towards the goodness of the one body of Christ, of which we all belong.

John 2:1-11 is another Epiphany story, a story of the revealing of Christ to the World. At the wedding in Cana, the wine has run out. While Jesus does not seem concerned about the wine running out, his mother is. While Jesus says, “My hour has not yet come,” Mary decides in a sense that it has: she instructs the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them to do, and the water poured into the jars turns into wine, revealing to the disciples his glory.

The Narrative Lectionary looks at the parables in the Gospel According to Mark. Jesus taught in parables to his disciples about the kingdom of God, comparing the kingdom of God to a sower scattering seed on different soils, to another one scattering seed, to a mustard seed. All of these show that the kingdom of God grows unexpectedly, and may not be what we expect. A mustard seed is a shrub (and some forms are invasive), but a place where birds make their nest and find their home. The disciples did not always understand what the parables meant, and rarely did Jesus explain them.

 Psalm 126 sings of returning from exile, and that this returning is like harvest time, carrying the sheaves, rejoicing in the goodness and the bounty that God has given. The people experience God’s faithfulness as they return home from exile and in the harvest God provides, year after year.

God has given us a variety of gifts, but we are one body. We are given spiritual gifts because of the faithfulness of God. God’s light is being revealed to the world, and we are called to participate in sharing the light, because the light of God is within us, in diverse and wondrous ways.

Call to Worship (from Galatians 3:25-38)

Now that faith has come,

 **We are no longer in need of a guardian.**

In Christ Jesus we are all children of faith,

 **We all belong to Christ.**

There is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female;

 **We are all one in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Come, worship Christ, who leads us into life.

 **Come, worship our God who makes us one.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

We have failed, O God, to remember our unity in You. We have fractured and divided over trivial matters. We have created enemies and refused to love them. We have not seen Your light in the work of those we disagree with. Forgive us for denying Your light in the world. Forgive us for not loving others as You have loved us, even when we have not followed Your commandments. Call us into the work of healing, restoration, and reconciliation. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God’s steadfast love endures forever. God will never leave you or forsake you. Even when you have gone astray, God is searching you, seeking you, and calling you by name. You are loved, forgiven, and called back to God’s embrace. Share the Good News: share God’s love. Amen.

Prayer

God of Justice and Mercy, call us into Your ways and send us into the world ready to do Your work. Help us to work in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized, to listen and hear their call. Guide us to partner with those working for justice, so that we do not oppress by bringing our own ideals and ways of doing things that may counter the work You are already doing. Help us to seek You in the world, rather than purport to bring You to others. For You are already doing a new thing. You are already working for justice. Your Spirit is already moving among the people. Help us to listen, to answer Your call, and to follow You. In the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, we pray. Amen.