Worship Resources for January 20, 2019—Second Sunday after the Epiphany, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Sunday

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

Narrative Lectionary: Tempted in the Wilderness, Matthew 4:1-17 (Psalm 91:9-12)

The prophet Isaiah declares that God will not remain silent in 62:1-5. The prophet speaks that God is bringing the people who have experienced the hardship of exile into a new time, with a new name that God will give them, a beloved people, and will no longer be called abandoned or forsaken. God will rejoice over them the way a groom rejoices in marrying the bride. God delights in the people.

The psalmist speaks of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness to the people in Psalm 36:5-10. The psalmist shares God’s care for creation, and God saves both humans and animals (think Noah, but also Jonah). In God is the fountain of life, and all people will find refuge and rest with God, who meets their needs. God’s salvation and steadfast love are for all who seek God with an upright heart.

Paul speaks of the variety of gifts from the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. The church in Corinth had deep divisions, and Paul reminds them that all their gifts come from God. Earlier in the letter, Paul names their divisions: they have chosen teachers to follow instead of following Christ, they have abused the Lord’s Supper so that the poor are hungry and the rich have everything to eat, and they have placed some gifts as greater than others. Paul reminds them that they were once pagans, led astray by idols, but now they have Jesus. There are a variety of gifts, services, and activities, but there is one God. It is the one and same Spirit who chooses to gift spiritual gifts.

The Wedding at Cana is only found in John’s account of the gospel. Soon after he has called the first disciples, they are invited to a wedding. Jesus’ mother is also there, and she informs him that the wine has run out. This would be a travesty—something that would bring shame to the couple—because they didn’t provide enough to drink. Jesus reminds his mother that it is not yet his time, but she tells the servants to do whatever he tells them. When he tells the servants to draw water out of the purification jars and to take it to the chief steward, the steward tastes it, and tells the bridegroom that they saved the best wine for last. This was a sign that Jesus’ disciples witnessed, revealing his glory, and they believed in him.

The Narrative Lectionary continues in Matthew’s account of the Gospel, covering the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. After Jesus resists the devil’s temptations, angels wait on him. In Matthew’s account, after John the Baptist has been arrested, Jesus withdraws to Galilee, and begins to preach his first sermons, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Matthew also quotes Isaiah 9:1-2, to show that Jesus fulfills the prophet Isaiah’s vision of a new king; at the time of Isaiah, that king was Hezekiah in Judah, but later the passage came to refer to a future messianic King.

Psalm 91:9-12 speaks of God as the protector of the faithful, the one who sends angels to guard and keep the people safe so they do not come into harm. Because the people have made their refuge in God, the psalmist speaks a blessing that no evil will come to them.

In this season after the Epiphany, we continue to experience the ways Christ is revealed to the world, but also to us as followers of Christ. Where do we see the signs? What causes us to pause, and believe? Where do we hear God speaking out? What is the Spirit doing right now in our lives? Jesus is on the move, and we are the witnesses of what Christ is doing in our lives and in the world.

Call to Worship

Listen! The voice of God is calling to us,

**The reign of God has drawn near!**

Feel it! The Holy Spirit is moving among us,

**The Spirit is leading us toward a new way of life.**

Know it! Jesus is revealing God’s ways to us,

**So that we might reveal God’s love to the world.**

Come! Worship God, follow Jesus, and trust in the Holy Spirit,

**For God is doing a new thing among us, and we are called to share it with the world.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty One, we confess that we don’t listen well. We interrupt the work of the Spirit because we think we know better. We half-hear the call of the prophets because living into Your ways of justice is hard. We ignore what Jesus has said because it’s easier if we don’t follow his ways of love and forgiveness. Forgive us for our selfishness. Forgive us when we choose the easy way out. Forgive us when we don’t listen to what You have said, time and again: that we are Your beloved children, and we are called to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with You. In the name of Christ, who has shown us time and again the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

The Loving One is always ready to receive us with open arms. The Loving One knows we continue to go astray, but the Loving One is always waiting, right at our shoulder as we turn back. The Loving One knows we still have room to grow, room to change, as long as we have breath and life. Receive forgiveness; extend forgiveness. God’s grace and love are with you. Amen.

Prayer

Giver of All Good Gifts, may we receive the gift of Your grace. May we bless others rather than curse; may we practice justice rather than revenge; may we live into kindness rather than karma. May we share all the gifts You have given us, of our time, talents, finances, and very selves. May we be good stewards of all You have entrusted us with, and care for the earth, all of creation, and our neighbors. Holy Spirit, help us to discern our gifts, how best to use them, and move in us to build up Your Beloved Community on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.