Worship Resources for January 25th, 2015—Third Sunday after Epiphany

Revised Common Lectionary: Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:5-12; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

Narrative Lectionary: Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1-20 (Psalm 1:1-3)

The theme through the Hebrew Scriptures in this season after Epiphany is the voice of God, the call of God. We hear the call of God to Jonah, to go proclaim the message that the city would be overthrown because of their wicked ways. But when the people repent, and turn back to God, God’s mind is changed. God decides not to destroy the people, but to save them. And beyond the passage for the lectionary reading, we find that Jonah is not happy with this, because Jonah came all this way to preach destruction only for God not to do it. Instead of seeing his message as successful in turning the people away from evil, Jonah is bitter about the whole thing and cannot see the goodness that has come from God.

Psalm 62:5-12 sings of putting one’s trust completely in God. God is the rock that cannot be shaken; God is the one that all power belongs to. God is the Almighty. Don’t put your trust in any worldly powers, especially wealth, because you will either be drawn to criminal activity, or will mourn when it is gone. Instead, the psalmist sings to put all your trust in God and be confident in God’s wisdom.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 are some metaphorical sayings of Paul to the church in Corinth to stop being a church of the world’s ways and instead be a church of God’s ways. The world that they have known in their present is passing away (and indeed it did, with the revolt in Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple—life would no longer be how they knew it).

Mark 1:14-20 contains the beginnings of Jesus’ ministry, after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, he preaches the same sermon that John began with: “Repent, and believe in the good news.” He calls forth his first disciples, who were fisherman—nobody really special, people who had grown up and lived in the same town as their parents and were doing the same things as their fathers—until Jesus called them from the boat and gave them an opportunity to do something else. “Follow me, and fish for people.” Instead of providing for themselves and the local economy, Jesus calls them to go and seek out the people who need to hear the message of God’s love. What was it about Jesus that made them go? Was it his charisma and charm? Or did they feel something inside, something from God, that said they needed to go, to live differently, and to be something different?

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-20. Jesus proclaims blessings to those who follow God’s ways and to those who need it—the meek, the poor in spirit. Jesus proclaims they are the salt of the earth, but warns against losing saltiness—what makes you unique and important. And finally, Jesus proclaims that he has come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Jesus has come to share the fullness of God’s love and the message from the prophets of old, which is not to turn away from God but to live more fully into God’s ways. The message of old is not to turn away from the law, but nor is it to live as if the law is just a set of rules—instead, Jesus proclaims it to be the Way of life, and that way is to love God and to love one another.

Psalm 1:1-3 speaks of those who live into God’s ways—they are happy, they are firmly rooted, and they know God’s ways in their heart and lives.

The call of God is not easy. The call of God may call us away from how we are presently living. Sometimes, we just want to get through our lives, just to survive, just to make it a little better for the next generation. But God calls us to live into the fullness of God’s love, and that is to transform the world. Not just make it a little better and to lead happy lives for ourselves, but to transform the world so that all may know God’s love, that justice would prevail, and therefore peace may come to all. We cannot just live for ourselves—and sometimes that call of God is very hard to follow, but it is worth it.

Call to Worship

The call of Christ compels us;

 **We join with Christ who laid down his life for us.**

The love of our neighbor compels us;

 **We join with one another on the journey of faith.**

The needs of the world compel us;

 **We join with our community in serving one another.**

Almighty God, who made us all, compels us;

 **We join in the work of God in this world.**

 **Come, let us join with Christ who calls us to follow him.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Spirit of Life, we confess that we don’t want to listen. We want to follow our own way and lead lives of relative comfort and security. Move us out of our comfort zone to a place of compassion and empathy. Move us away from our own fears so that we can work into the ways of justice for all. Call us into Your ministry of love, restoration, justice and peace. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God is always calling your name, in whispers on the wind, the cry of the waves on the beach, even in the sheer silence: God is calling your name. God is calling you to restoration and reconciliation. You are forgiven, loved, and restored. Amen.

Prayer

Creator of all, we come to You knowing that there are many distractions in our lives and in our world that draw us away from You, but we desire to know You more fully, more deeply. Guide us into ways of living that deepen our spirits, that draw us closer, and that move us to work for justice and peace. Help us to quiet our minds from the worries we carry and lift up our hearts when the world gets us down. Guide us back to the rhythm of life with You when the fast pace of the world throws us off. In the name of Christ, our companion on this journey of faith, we pray. Amen.