Worship Resources for October 15, 2017—Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Exodus 32:1-14 and Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Isaiah 25:1-9 and Psalm 23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:1-14

Narrative Lectionary: God Calls Samuel, 1 Samuel 3:1-21 (John 20:21-23)

God has an argument with Moses about who the people really belong to. When Moses is delayed on the mountain and the people complain to Aaron, Aaron makes them an idol and says, “Here’s your god!” And God yells as Moses, “Go down at once! *Your* people, that *you* brought out of Egypt have acted perversely!” And God orders Moses to stand aside so God can obliterate these offensive people and make a great nation out of Moses. But Moses asks God, “Why does *your* wrath burn hot against *your* people, whom *you* brought out of Egypt with a great power and a mighty hand?” And through Moses reminding God that these people indeed are God’s people, God changes their mind.

The psalmist in Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 praises God, remembering the good works God has done. The psalmist recalls that those who do justice and live in righteousness are happy, and that when God delivers the people, the psalmist rejoices and remembers what God has done for the people; however, the psalmist also recalls how the people have rejected and forgotten God in the past. It was Moses who stood in the breach, who helped God turn away from wrath.

Isaiah 25:1-9 is a psalm, praising God for the work God has done, from plans of old. The powerful have been destroyed, but God has not forgotten the poor and downtrodden. While foreign occupiers were like a winter storm, and desert heat, God stopped the storm and subdued the heat. God has prepared a feast for the people, where the shroud of death will be no more. God will comfort the people, for this is the God they have waited for.

Psalm 23 is the ancient song of comfort, attributed historically to David. The song reminds the listener that God is our shepherd, whose staff brings comfort as God guides us through the valley of the shadow of death, who leads us to still waters, who prepares a feast before us and anoints us, and leads us home.

As Paul nears the end of his letter to the Philippians, he addresses the more personal conflict that is affecting the church. There is some sort of discord between Euodia and Syntyche that has gotten back to Paul, who urges the church, and the one carrying the letter, to help these women be of the same mind—that is, to have the mind of Christ. Paul continues to urge the readers to keep on doing what they were taught by Paul, and to know that Christ is with them. God hears their prayers, and will give them peace.

Jesus tells the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22:1-14, in which the kingdom of God is like a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son, but none of the invited guests showed up, and even when the king sent out his servants, they made excuses, and then they attacked the king’s servants. So the king destroyed them, and instead sent the servants out to the streets and invited people in, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But one came to the table who was not wearing the wedding robe, and the king had him thrown out. This is a harsh parable, and Jesus told this parable soon before his arrest and death. Many are called, but few are chosen. Perhaps many are called, but few choose to follow through, even the one who came in without a wedding robe.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the Call of the Prophet Samuel. Samuel was a young boy dedicated to God by his mother Hannah and was being raised by the priest Eli. God spoke to Samuel, but Samuel had never heard the voice of God and thought it was Eli, until Eli finally understood that God was calling him. God called Eli to speak to Israel and make their ears tingle, and Samuel grew in the temple and became the prophet of God.

Jesus commissions the disciples in John 20:21-23, and breathes on them, sharing the Holy Spirit. As God sent Jesus, so Jesus sent the disciples.

Both lectionaries speak to a sense of calling, and how we respond to God’s call on our lives. Do we pay lip service, or do we give our whole selves to God? Eli’s sons fell short, but Samuel, dedicated by his own mother, gave his life to follow God’s call. Moses stood in the breach to remind God that God called the people out of Egypt, that they were God’s people. Jesus told a parable about how so many do not respond, or when they respond, do so out of violence, and refuse to accept the invitation to the banquet table of grace. God invites us with grace, justice, and peace, and to leave our violence behind.

Call to Worship

God invites us to the banquet table;

**Many are called, but few choose to respond.**

God has prepared a feast for us in the presence of all;

**A table which has no end, in which the shroud of death has been removed forever.**

God is waiting for us to join in;

**We have been waiting for God our whole lives, and God has opened the door.**

Come, join the banquet table of God;

**Come, accept the invitation to God’s ways of love, peace, and justice. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Righteousness, we confess that our ways our violent. We are full of envy, we desire what others have, we allow our anger to fester into hatred. We say we want the kingdom, but we don’t want to change for it. We want peace for ourselves without putting an end to our evil ways. Forgive us, O God. Clear our hearts from the infestation of violence. Create in us hearts of peace, to bend to Your will to love our neighbor as ourselves. Guide us in the paths of righteousness. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God does not take back the invitation. The door is always open. The table is always set. There is always a place at the table for you. Accept it, and accept those who are also invited to the table. Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. Forgive one another as Christ has forgiven you. Come, for all things are ready. Amen.

Prayer

God of Justice, call us into the work of justice and peace. Call us to fasting and praying, whether on our knees, or in the streets demanding justice. Call us into a life of prayer that moves us into compassionate action. Stir in us Your Spirit, so that we do not sit idly by. Our world is torn by violence. Our lives have been shattered by heartbreak. Enough is enough is enough! You have called us. You have chosen us. If not us, then no one. So it must be us who answer Your call. Give us the courage and strength to do so. Amen. Amen. Amen.