Worship Resources for October 23, 2016—Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Joel 2:23-32 or Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22; Psalm 65 or Psalm 84:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14

Narrative Lectionary: God’s Promise to David, 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (Luke 1:30-33)

For all the people have been through, God promises through the prophet Joel that they will have more than enough once God is through with them. God is going to bring an abundant harvest, and will wipe away all the wrongs the people have faced. God’s spirit will be upon all of them—young and old, male and female, slave and free—and when the day of the Lord comes, all who call upon God’s name will be saved.

Jeremiah argues with God in chapter 14. The people cry out for God, who seems to be a stranger to them. But God reminds Jeremiah that they have turned away from God, rejected God’s ways by wandering to other gods and lands. However, Jeremiah asks if God has really, truly, rejected them, because they acknowledge their wrongdoing, and the people plead with God, who is the only God who can provide for them, to rescue them.

The psalmist sings a song of praise for harvest and God’s bounty and deliverance in Psalm 65. God has provided for all, from the plentiful forest to the rain that falls. However, water can also be dangerous, but God is the one who soothes the seas, and the rivers swell with God’s bountiful water that nourishes the earth. All of creation, from forests to pastureland to the roaring seas, are created to delight God and they each praise God in their own way.

Psalm 84:1-7 praises God for dwelling among us on earth. Even birds find a nest, a branch to settle on (Jesus echoes this image in the Parable of the Mustard Seed, where the birds of the air find nests in its branches). For those who find their home in God, they find rest and security, strength and joy.

We conclude our readings from 2 Timothy with the writer’s assurance that they have done all they can, they have completed what they set out to do and have kept the faith. The writer acknowledges that at times they were abandoned by others, but hopefully that will not be held against them; instead, may there be a crown of righteousness. The writer finishes with a prayer proclaiming God’s protection.

Jesus tells a parable of two men who went to pray in Luke 18:9-14. One was a Pharisee—so you would assume they were a righteous, Godly person—and the other was a tax collector, so you would assume they were a swindler, selfish, and greedy. However, the one you would assume to be Godly is arrogant, self-centered, and full of pride and brags about all he does; and the one you would assume to be selfish prays for mercy, standing away from the other, beating his breast (a sign of repentance). Our assumptions and judgments about others can often be false, as is our judgments and assumptions about what is Godly or holy or good.

The Narrative Lectionary moves to God’s Promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. David has a strong desire to build a temple to God, the God who has led him to victory and united the kingdom. The prophet Nathan agrees with David, until God comes to Nathan in a vision. God doesn’t desire a worldly home, a fancy house, but rather to dwell among the people. Instead, God tells David through Nathan that God will make a house out of him—a line of descendants. And one of his descendants (Solomon) will be the one to build the temple. God promises David that his line and his throne will endure forever.

We are reminded of the Angel Gabriel’s promise to Mary in Luke 1:30-33, that the Messiah will be given the throne of David, and that he will reign over the house of Jacob forever—a continuation of the promises of God from the time of the prophet Nathan.

The sign of the Spirit among us is living in righteousness (right-living) with our neighbors. A Godly life is the life of living into God’s ways of love, justice, and mercy. However, sometimes, like the Pharisee in the parable, we have convoluted our own pride and arrogance with being right, and believe somehow that is righteousness, rather than being like the tax collector, acknowledging our own shortcomings, seeking mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Call to Worship

Follow the way of God;

**Live into the ways of justice and mercy.**

Follow the way of Christ;

**Love and forgive your neighbors as you are loved and forgiven.**

Follow the way of the Spirit;

**Use your gifts to bless others in the world and be blessed.**

Come, worship our God,

**Who leads us into the paths of righteousness.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that at times we are petty. We hold grudges over trivial things; we cling to anger over reconciliation; we do not accept the apologies of others. Forgive us for not seeing the greater worldview, that You have forgiven us for our sins, that You have forgiven humanity for our sin of violence. Forgive us, and call us into accountability to seek restoration. In the name of Christ, who leads us into life, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

There is no where you can go where God cannot find you. There is no place you can sink to where God cannot draw you out. There is nothing you can do that can separate you from God’s love. Go, love, forgive, and live. Amen.

Prayer

Beautiful Creator, thank You for creating a world of amazement and wonder. Thank You for the blessings of friendship, for the bonds of family that are beyond blood. Thank You for the creative energy that is in each of us—for art, for storytelling, for engineering, for overactive childhood imaginations and intricate design—all of Your creativity is displayed in the creativity of each of us, and we thank You for Your image embodied in each of us, in unique wonder and love. Thank You, Beautiful Creator. Amen.