Worship Resources for October 27th, 2019—Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

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

Narrative Lectionary: Kingdom Divided, 1 Kings 12:1-17; 25-29 (Mark 10:42-45)

The prophet Joel has a vision of hope for those in despair and diaspora in 2:23-32. Joel prophesies that once again there will be abundant rain and a glorious harvest, the threshing floors full of grain and vats overflowing with wine and oil. For all their suffering, the people will experience the abundance of God, and they will know who their God is. The Spirit will be poured out upon them on the day of the Lord, the day of judgment, but the faithful will be saved—all who call upon the name of the Lord.

The psalmist sings praise to God who answers prayer in Psalm 65. God forgives and delivers the people from evil, bringing the people into the sanctuary of God. God brings water to the earth and provides the harvest, and “crowns the year” with God’s bounty. Even the wilderness overflows with God’s abundance. All of creation sings for joy at the works of God.

The prophet Jeremiah intervenes as an intermediary between God and the people in 14:7-10, 19-22. Jeremiah implores God not to forget the people, to not become like a stranger, but to answer the cry of the people. Though they have wandered away from God, Jeremiah questions God rhetorically—how could God forget the people? Jeremiah confesses the sins of Israel and Judah before God, acknowledging their faults and evil ways, but it is only God who can save them; therefore, Jeremiah calls upon the One the people set their hope in.

The psalmist sings for joy of God’s sanctuary, God’s home in Psalm 84:1-7. The soul of the psalmist longs for the heavenly courts of God, where even the birds find a home. Those who find their strength in God know the way to Zion, to God’s heavenly home, where they belong, and where they sing God’s praise.

The writer of 2 Timothy, purporting to be Paul, writes that their days are drawing to an end in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18, and leaves with words of encouragement. The writer has kept the faith, and though it was a struggle, it was worth it. Even though his supporters abandoned him at times, God did not. The writer knows they will be with God in the heavenly kingdom, and writes to encourage others to endure to the end.

Jesus tells a short parable in Luke 18:9-14, of a Pharisee and a tax collector who went up to pray. Jesus used these two as examples because a Pharisee would be seen as someone respectable, and a tax collector would not. Assumptions are challenged when this particular Pharisee is not humble, but the tax collector cannot even lift their eyes, seeking mercy from God because they are a sinner. The tax collector, because of his humility and acknowledgement of doing wrong, is lifted up as the example of the one who is justified, and that those who humble themselves will be exalted.

The Narrative Lectionary turns to the divided kingdom in 1 Kings 12:1-17, 25-29. Following Solomon, his son Rehoboam became king, but due to the worship of Astarte under Solomon, God promised Jeroboam ten of the twelve tribes of Israel. Rehoboam did not listen to the elders, and treated the people harshly, so Jeroboam rebelled with the northern tribes. But Jeroboam also had his faults, and created two golden calves for the people to worship, leading the people astray as Rehoboam and Solomon had done before him, dividing the kingdom and God’s people.

In Mark 10:42-45 Jesus speaks to his disciples of how the Gentiles have a hierarchy, and rule over each other, but that this is not how it is in the reign of God. For in the reign of God, the greatest must become the servant of all, as Christ has come not to be served but to serve and give himself over for many.

We are a flawed, broken people. The systemic sin of the world facilitates oppression of many, and for those who have privilege, it is hard to give up. But in the reign of God it must be so. The greatest must serve all. Those with power and privilege must give it up to break the yoke of oppression, to dismantle white supremacy and systemic sin. But it is difficult to do. We fall and fail, time and again. Yet Christ came because he loves us all, to destroy the system of violence in this world, and to break the systems of oppression. It is difficult work, but work we are called to participate in. It’s a process, a journey, and Christ will see us through.

Call to Worship

The road is long, but the journey is worth it.

 **We do not travel alone; we are part of the great fellowship of saints.**

The life of faith rises and falls,

 **But God is with us, every step of the way.**

The Spirit gives us endurance and strength for the journey;

 **Christ has called us into a community of living hope.**

Come, join us on the journey of faith;

 **Share in the Good News of God’s Love,**

 **Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Hope and Faith, we confess that our wandering sometimes leads to doubt, and doubt leads to uncertainty, and uncertainty can lead to a lack of trust. But sometimes uncertainty leads us to new faith, new hope, new trust that You have not left us alone. Help us to know that when we fall into doubt and uncertainty, we are not alone. We have one another. You have called us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and what we lack in faith in You, may we be restored in faith in one another. Help us to become Living Hope to each other, and through the helping hands and hearts that surround us, may our faith in You be renewed again. In Christ Jesus our Lord, who became one of us, who became our Living Hope, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

The Spirit is alive and among us, moving in us toward the work of justice and mercy. The Spirit is alive and among us, calling us into accountability and forgiveness, with the hope of reconciliation and peace. The Spirit is alive and with you, for you are God’s beloved. God forgives you, loves you, and remembers your sin no more. The Spirit is alive and breathing in you, now, to send you out into the world to share the good news. Amen.

Prayer

Spirit of Prophecy, You moved in the prophets and sages of old, calling us to seek the deeper way, to attain the higher wisdom. You cried out in the prophets for justice, to make their stand against evil in this world. Move in us now. Help us to become Your prophetic people, to speak truth to power, to dismantle the systems of oppression, to know Your Spirit is alive and among us now. Spirit of Prophecy, give us a voice as one people, and move us from thoughts and prayers to action that brings lasting change. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. May Your reign come on earth now and always. Amen.