Worship Resources for October 7, 2018—Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, World Communion Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary: Job 1:1, 2:1-10 and Psalm 26; Genesis 2:18-24 and Psalm 8; Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Mark 10:2-16

Narrative Lectionary: Covenant and Commandments, Exodus 19:3-7; 20:1-17 (Matthew 5:17)

The first selection from the Hebrew Scriptures continues in Wisdom literature, turning to Job. This story is an ancient folktale in the middle east, of God and Satan making a bet about whether someone would remain faithful to God if they had to endures such hardships. Satan in this story is not the source of evil, but rather “the Accuser” whose job in the heavenly court, in which God is judge, is to show God that Job only is faithful because he gets something out of it. If he suffers, he’ll curse God, he wagers. God takes the bet. When all is taken from Job, his own wife tells him to just curse God and die, to get it over with, but Job refuses. Job declares, “shall we not receive the good at the hand of God, and not the bad?” He refuses to curse God.

Psalm 26 is a plea of innocence before God. The psalmist insists they have been true to God and ask God to test them, so that God will know it is so. The psalmist pleas with God not to share the same fate as sinners, for they have remained faithful to God and will continue to do so. The psalmist declares they will continue to bless God before the congregation, and remain faithful.

Genesis 2:18-24 comes from the second account of creation in Genesis. In this account, a human being (in Hebrew, *adam*) is formed. God determines it is not good for this human being to be alone, and creates another as its helper, by using a rib bone, creating Woman. This is a story of how we are created not to be alone, that we are to be partners together, and why marriage came to be.

Psalm 8 is a song praising God for creation, and for the creation of human beings. What are we in comparison to the vastness of the universe God has created? Yet God has made human beings a little lower than the angels, and has put all of creation under the care of human beings. This seals the purpose for humanity: to care for God’s creation, for we are a little lower than God and the angels.

The Epistle reading begins a series through the Letter to the Hebrews. This letter attempts to put into perspective the Hebrew scriptures in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus became human like all of us for a little while. Now we are siblings of Christ, for Christ has died the same death we do and now lives, so we will.

Jesus is questioned in Mark 10:2-16 about divorce and welcoming children. It is important to read this passage in light of the culture and understanding of marriage from two thousand years ago. Marriage was about an exchange of property and inheritance. Unless a woman came from a prominent family, she had no rights, and often divorce forced women into begging and prostitution. Children were also seen as having no value until they became adults, as so many children died young, and too many children for a family would put them into poverty. In this passage, Jesus declares that divorce is not God’s intention for us. God’s intention is for us to become one flesh. In the same manner, God’s intention for us is to welcome children the way God welcomes us. The disciples were turning children away, but Jesus told the disciples to let them come to him, and not to stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such children as these.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the Covenant and Commandments in Exodus 19 and 20. God declares through Moses that the people of Israel are to be a priestly kingdom. The covenant God makes with the people reminds them that their God brought them out of slavery into freedom, and God’s commandments are to keep them a priestly nation. These commandments keep the people honoring and worshiping God above all others, and instruct how they are to live as a nation with one another. The covenant separates them from all other people, that they have been delivered by God, and therefore were chosen by God to be the people of the covenant.

Jesus declares in Matthew 5:17 that he came not to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them. Jesus is not declaring something new, but renewing something very old.

Things happen to us and in our lives that are not part of God’s intention. It is not God’s intention for us to suffer. It is not God’s intention for us to go through divorce. It is not God’s intention for us to experience hardship. But this is life, and these things happen. What God does intend for us is life, love, and hope, and the covenantal promise that God is our God. God is with us in life and death. Through Jesus, we know that even God has suffered, and that we will endure. God’s promise is life, and despite hardship, pain, and suffering, we will endure. And we will live, now and through eternity.

Litany for World Communion Sunday:

May this bread, broken, remind us of our own brokenness;

 **May this bread, broken, remind us that in Christ we are made whole.**

May this cup, poured out, remind us of Christ’s love for us;

 **May this cup, shared with all, remind us that we are forgiven in Christ Jesus.**

May this meal, shared together around the world, remind us that we are one body;

 **May this bread and this cup nourish us, fill us, and strengthen us as one.**

On this World Communion Sunday, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper together:

 **Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again, for us all.**

Call to Worship (from Psalm 8:1-5, 9)

O God, our Sovereign, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!

 **You have set Your glory above the heavens.**

Out of the mouths of babes and infants,

**You have laid a strong foundation.**

When I look at the skies, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars You have set in place,

 **What are human beings that You care about us?**

Yet you have made us only slightly lower than the Divine,

 **You have crowned us with glory and honor.**

O God, our Sovereign,

 **How majestic is Your name in all the earth!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God, we confess that sometimes it’s all too much. There is so much pain and suffering around us. So much injustice in this world. So much hardship and sacrifice for nothing, it seems. God, sometimes we want to throw in the towel. Help us to not give up. Renew our hearts. Restore our spirit. Help us to remember that every act of kindness and compassion helps to build Your reign on earth as it is in heaven. Keep us kind-hearted. Help us to stay hopeful. Guide us in ways that encourage and uplift others, so our own spirits may be raised. In the name of Christ, who suffered with us, whose love endures forever, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are you, when you endure, when you cling to God’s love and forgiveness, and share that love and forgiveness with others. Practice kindness and mercy, and live into God’s ways of justice and peace. Amen.

Prayer

God of love, God who is One, we pray that we may be One. We pray that we will cast aside our divisions and seek to reconcile with one another, without losing who we are. We know that oneness does not mean sameness. You created us in wondrous, beautiful diversity; help us to celebrate what makes us unique while remembering we are one people, who live on one planet, with one God who made us all. Help us to remember that the same blood runs through all our veins, the same heart beats and loves and breaks, and the same spirit that has led us to new insights and understandings continues to lead us forward. God of love, God who is One, may we love one another as Your children, all Your family, all belonging to You. In the name of Christ, in whom we are one body, we pray. Amen.