Worship Resources for October 8th, 2017—Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 and Psalm 19; Isaiah 5:1-7 and Psalm 80:7-15; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46

Narrative Lectionary: God Provides Manna, Exodus 16:1-18 (John 6:51)

The Decalogue, or more commonly known, the Ten Commandments, are given to Moses on Sinai as instruction for the people. The first four have to do with God. The people ought to worship God above other gods, and have no idols, for this is the God who brought them out of Egypt. They shall not misuse God’s name, and remember that the sabbath day is a gift from God and to keep it holy to remember all that God has done for them. The next six are for how the people ought to live in community. Respecting elders, being honest and truthful, and not wanting what others have. For a people that were once a family, but now a new nation, this was the foundation of how they would live together. God was making a covenant with them, and the Decalogue became the foundation of their covenant with one another. The people were afraid of God, but Moses told the people God wanted them to rely on God and to trust in God’s ways.

Psalm 19 is a song praising God for all creation, and that all creation declares the glory of God. God’s law is perfect, the psalmist declares, and they are what leads us into right paths. The psalmist sings that both creation and the law proclaim God’s ways, and the psalmist asks God to cleanse them of any hidden faults, and to let the words of their mouth and meditation of their hearts be accepted by God.

Isaiah 5:1-7 is a parable of a vineyard that the prophet Isaiah tells, that God took great care of, but the vineyard still grew wild grapes. God wonders what they could have done differently, they did everything right, but the wild grapes still disobeyed. So God is remove the hedge and wall that protects it. The vineyard represents the people, that God led and gave the law to, but the people practiced injustice instead, so now they will have to live with the injustice they have cultivated.

The psalmist also uses the image of a vineyard that God planted to represent the people in Psalm 80:7-15. In this case, however, the people have torn down their own wall, so anyone can take its fruit, and the vineyard is ravaged by the wild animals. The psalmist pleads with God to look down and take notice, and to help the people, even though they have sabotaged themselves by turning away from God’s ways.

Paul writes to the church in Philippi, and is concerned about what they may have heard from the Judaizers in Philippians 3:4b-14. The Judaizers were a group of Jewish Christians who felt that Gentiles could not be saved until they were circumcised. Paul argues that if anyone could be confident by their circumcision as a sign of salvation, he could, because he was a Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin, had participated in all the right rituals and did all the right things; yet, none of that means anything without Christ. Paul argues he cannot attain righteousness by his life, but attains righteousness because of his faith in Christ. Press on to the heavenly goal of resurrection, Paul declares, because we can do nothing in this life to earn it, but by faith accept it, by becoming like Christ.

Jesus tells a parable of a vineyard in Matthew 21:33-46. In this parable, a landowner planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants while he traveled to another country. But when harvest time came, he sent his servants to collect the harvest, and the tenants beat them, assaulted and killed some of them. He sent more servants, and they were treated the same way. Then the landowner sent his son, thinking, “Surely they will respect him.” But they seized him and killed him. Jesus asks the people what they think will happen to the tenants, and the people say that the tenants will be put to death and other tenants will be given the vineyard. Jesus then speaks of the stone being rejected that becomes the chief cornerstone, and the religious leaders know that Jesus is talking about them. Jesus knew what would happen, and yet still taught and proclaimed the kingdom of God was at hand, knowing that they were plotting his death.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on God providing Manna for the people in the wilderness. When the people cross the Red Sea from slavery into freedom, after rejoicing, the next thing they do is complain. They complain about being hungry and say they would have rather died in Egypt satisfied from hunger than be in the wilderness free but hungry. So God provides quail and manna, just enough each day (and twice as much for the Sabbath). The people’s needs are met when they trust God.

In John 6:51, Jesus declares that he is the living bread, given by God, and that through him, we have enough; we have life eternal.

God meets us and provides enough for our needs. As human beings, however, we have taken advantage of others. We have refused to believe we have enough and have taken it so that others do not have enough to live on. God has shown us the way of life—to put God first, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, but we have put ourselves first and treated our neighbor as less than. Our ways lead to death. Our ways lead to short-term satisfaction and long-term suffering, not only for ourselves but for others. We must change our ways. We must put God first, follow the way of God taught to us in the law and lived out in the life of Jesus, and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Call to Worship

Turn your hearts to Christ, follow the way of Jesus;

 **For in Christ you are loved and forgiven.**

Love and serve God, by keeping God first in your life;

 **Love Jesus, and know Christ’s love is with you.**

Do not want what others have, and love your neighbor as yourself;

 **When God is first in your life, all other desires fall away.**

In this time of worship, focus your mind on Christ;

 **For the way of Christ leads us to eternal life.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we lack faith in one another. We believe the worst about humanity and the worst about others. We allow our suspicions to fester and our fears to grow wild. We allow anger and blame to consume us and we focus on the wrongdoings of others. We refuse to see our own faults, our own mistakes, our own actions that cause harm to others. Forgive us. Call us back to Your ways, of loving You, the one who created us in Your image. Help us to see Your image in others, and to lift up the best in humanity instead of only looking for the worst. Grant us courage to find the goodness in the world, to seek peace and pursue it. In the name of Christ, who brings out the best in humanity, the best in us, by laying down his life for us, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

You are made in God’s image. God is good, and the image of God in you is beautiful. Embrace your inner beauty and goodness. Know you are forgiven. Now go, and share that goodness with others, and find the goodness in the world, and in your neighbor. Go, share God’s love and forgiveness. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Prayer

Holy One, help us to find the holy in our everyday life. Help us to find the holy as we fold the laundry, as we clean up the mess from breakfast, as we tie the shoes of a little one. Help us to find the holy as we pick up trash someone else left behind, as we wait patiently to cross a busy street, as we take notice of the people in need on the street around us. Help us to find blessings in this world and to bless others, by sharing Your love with ordinary, everyday people in our ordinary, everyday lives. In the name of Jesus, who lived a life like ours, and gave his life for us, we pray. Amen.