Worship Resources for November 10th—Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Haggai 1:15b-2:9 or Job 19:23-27a; Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21, or Psalm 98, or Psalm 17:1-9; Luke 20:27-38; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

As we near the end of year C in the lectionary cycle, our readings turn toward a future with hope, the kingdom of God coming. For the people in Haggai’s time, this was the promise of a return from exile, the resettling of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. What was once beautiful before, will now be beyond their imagination. God is doing something far beyond what we can see, and it will be greater than what they have known and what has been lost.

Job cries out, “I know that my Redeemer lives,” in response to not only what has befallen him—the loss of his children, property and even his own health—but in response to the accusations by his friends that he must have done something to cause this to happen. Job feels utterly alone, but Job knows that God is there and that God knows the truth. God will set things right (though it will not be the way that Job wants it to be necessarily at first).

Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21 praises God who is just, who does good works, and is faithful to those who love God. The psalmist sings praises to God who has been faithful throughout the generations. God is the Creator and the one who Reigns over all.

Psalm 98 sings of God as the judge of the world. “Make a joyful noise,” the psalmist cries, bringing in all sorts of instruments to compliment the music already made by the roaring sea, the floods and the hills. God is the Creator, the one who calls all of creation to praise God.

Psalm 17:1-9 is a third option for this week’s Lectionary readings. This psalm sings of God as the one who answers when someone cries out. God is the one who knows our hearts and knows when we are true or not. God is the one who judges and who delivers. God will guard us and keep us in times of trouble.

We skip ahead from where we have been reading in Luke to 20:27-38. As we approach the end of the calendar year, we read passages that point to Jesus as the One Who Reigns—the one who reigns over life and defeats death. In this passage, we read about the Sadducees questioning the resurrection (and we are reminded that the Pharisees were actually closer to Jesus in terms of beliefs about the resurrection and the even the law). Jesus’ answer to the Sadducees riddle is that God is the God of the living, and that their question about death does not apply. Jesus looks at the world and the riddle through a heavenly point of view, rather than the worldly view, which would be concerned about property rights, lineage and inheritance. The heavenly view is that all of us are children of God, and the worldly view of marriage (as understood in that day) should not be of great concern.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 speaks of the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord was spoken about by the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, a day in which God’s judgment would come, and the New Testament writers pick up on this theme as they look to a time when Jesus will return. God will make all things new, but it will not be easy for the world to experience. God’s justice is restorative, but that does not make it easy to experience. For the early Christians, they believed Jesus would return in their lifetime and establish a new kingdom on earth. As time grew on and the early generations of Christians passed on, they had to change their views, believing that God would only return once there was great conflict—the ideas of war, battles, and an Antichrist came to be. The faithful, however, will be gathered up and saved by God. The faithful must endure, for the people were beginning to understand that they would probably not see the day of the Lord in their lifetime.

As the church year draws to a close, we are reminded that we must endure. God is with us, even when we feel that God is absent. God will see us through, even if that day seems so far off. God will remain faithful even when we do not, though it feels like God has abandoned us. God is the God of creation. God made the earth and all that is in it, but we have made the world into what it is. We are the ones who gave importance to possessions and became concerned about property and inheritance. We are the ones who give importance to kingdoms and countries and boundaries. But when we look to God, we see what endures: God’s love for us. When we look to God, we see the importance of helping and encouraging one another. We see that God’s future for us involves reconciliation, peace, and restoration—but that doesn’t mean the process won’t be painful. It is painful to let go of what the world holds as important, for we have made it important. But we are called to let go of the world, to reach out to the Creator instead and the Creator’s ways.

Call to Worship

The world calls out to us to start shopping

 **Tune our ears to hear Your call, O God**

The world says get busy and be productive

 **Slow us down to hear what You have to say, O God**

The world shows us we need so much more

 **Show us that what we need is in You, O God**

Turn our minds away from the world

 **Open our hearts to You in this time of worship. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Creator God, we have turned away from what You have made for us, and instead have placed importance on the things we have made for ourselves. We have given worth to possessions instead of people. We have desired things over relationships. We have resorted to violence instead of valuing Your creation, and have devalued our brothers and sisters in the world. Forgive us. Turn us away from the world we have created and instead turn us back to You, the Creator of heavens and earth. All this we pray in Your name. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon (from Lamentations 3:22-23)

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; God’s mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning; great is God’s faithfulness. God always gives us a new beginning, a fresh start. God offers us the promise of new life in Christ. Know that You are love, forgiven, and given new life. Amen.

Prayer

God of all creation, You make all things new. You renew in us hope that the world will change, that things will turn around, that all will turn to You and Your ways. In times of despair, lift us up. In times of darkness, shine Your light. When we can’t see our next steps, give us courage to keep going. Gentle Guide, You are always beside us. You have come before us and You go ahead of us. You have prepared a way for us. Help us to trust in You. In the name of Christ, our companion, we pray. Amen.