Worship Resources for November 10th, 2019—Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost

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

Narrative Lectionary: Hosea, 11:1-9 (Mark 10:13-14)

Our first selection from the Hebrew scriptures, Haggai, is a book that scholars know the relative date it was written, within a few months during 520 B.C.E. After the decree of Cyrus for the exiles to return home, Haggai urges the governor and the high priest to take courage and complete the work God has given them. This is the same God who brought them out of Egypt, and has brought them out of exile to return home. There may even be a few who were alive before the first temple was destroyed, and Haggai calls upon them to trust in God. They are to rebuild God’s temple, and it will be grander and more glorious than before.

Psalm 145 is a song of praise, the leader calling upon the congregation to join them in praising God, from one generation to the next. The psalmist lists off all of God’s ways of justice and kindness, that God draws near to the faithful, and hears the cry of those who are in awe of them. God watches over and protects those who love God, but the wicked will be destroyed.

Psalm 98 is also a song of praise for God’s faithfulness. God has shown faithfulness to the people, and the psalmist calls upon the congregation to praise God, but also calls upon the whole earth, all of creation, to join in this song. God has come to judge the earth, and will judge the people with equity.

The second selection from the Hebrew scriptures is this short passage from Job. Job pleads that people would listen to him, that his words would not fall away but be written down, etched in stone. Because Job believes in God and knows that God is his redeemer. Though Job’s friends have argued that all the misfortune Job has experienced must be because of a lack of faith, Job knows that in the end he will stand before God, for God is the ultimate judge, but also his ultimate defense.

The psalmist comes before God, seeking God’s vindication before their accusers in Psalm 17:1-9. They know they stand before God in truth, and plead for God to answer their prayer, for they know they have walked in the right path. The psalmist calls upon God to shelter them from their enemy, knowing they have done right, and that God will guard them and show them steadfast love.

The Epistle reading continues in 2 Thessalonians. In this selection, the writer calls upon the receivers to hold fast to the traditions and teachings that were already given them, to not be deceived. The writer eludes to a lawless one who declares himself to be God and puts himself above others. Instead, the writer encourages the receivers to stand firm, holding on to gospel they have received.

Some Sadducees test Jesus in Luke 20:27-38. The Sadducees were another Jewish group in the first century, and they did not believe in the resurrection, centered mainly in Jerusalem among the elite and with connections to the priesthood. One of the Sadducees asks him a question in the form of a riddle, about a man who died, and his wife had to marry the brother, but all the brothers die, and she has married all of them—whose wife is she in heaven? Jesus replies that in the resurrection people are neither married nor do they marry, because they are like angels, children of the resurrection. They are not dead but living. In this age, we marry, and in Jesus’ day women had to be married to have children and pass down inheritance. But in the age to come, the age of resurrection that Jesus speaks of, there is no need for marriage because there is no worldly inheritance—all are children of God.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the prophet Hosea in 11:1-9. The prophet Hosea uses the image of God as a parent, a father of Israel, also called Ephraim, depicted as a young child. God has loved the people, but they have gone astray and worshiped Baals and other idols. Because they have refused to stay true to God, the prophet declares they will go into exile in Assyria. But God laments this. God cannot give up the people forever, and God promises that the people will not be completely destroyed.

In Mark 10:13-14, Jesus instructs the disciples not to keep the children away, but to allow them to come forward, because it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

We are all God’s beloved children. Traditions, teachings, the ordinances and laws of old—have all been passed down and entrusted to us to carry on. Though we may only see a glimpse of the reign of God in our lifetime, we pass on the hope to future generations, that they might live to see its fruition. We remain faithful to God, knowing that God has, and will be, faithful to all of us, for generations to come.

Call to Worship (from Psalm 98:1, 4, 9b)

O sing to the Lord a new song,

 **For God has done marvelous things.**

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;

 **Break forth into joyous songs and sing praises.**

For God is coming to judge the earth;

 **God will judge the world with righteousness, the people with equity.**

Come, worship our God with song and prayer,

 **And may we live into God’s ways of love, justice, and mercy.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Loving God, we confess that we do not always see each other as Your children, as our siblings. We confess that we hold to the ways of this world, and seek worldly comforts in wealth and possessions. We confess that it is hard for us to let go, and to envision Your reign and the age of resurrection. Forgive us for our short-sightedness. Call us into Your ways, to understand one another as Your people, Your children, our siblings that You have called us to love as ourselves. Break us free from worldly measures of success and worldly fears of scarcity and liberate us to know the fullness of the love You have for us by loving one another. In the name of Christ, our brother who came to us, died as one of us, and lives now and forever, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

We are bound together in the birthwaters of baptism. We are God’s beloved children. There is no place you can go, no place you can hide from God’s spirit, for you are precious to God, and we belong to one another. Know that you are loved, that you are gifted for good works. Go and share the good news of God’s love, grace, and forgiveness—and participate in the work of justice in this world, so that all might be restored. Amen.

Prayer

Living God, You are the same God that made the universe, the world, and all of us. You led our ancestors from a land they knew to an unknown place. You led them out of slavery and domination into liberation and freedom. You led them from exile to home. You sent our ancestors in faith out to the world, and You have brought us together, now. You are the living God, the one who lives and breathes the Spirit in us, and You call us to move. Move in us now, O God, that all we do might encourage life to flourish. That all we do would support, nurture, and sustain whole and abundant lives. Call us into the work of justice, the work of peace, the work of restoration—for all these lead to life. Living God, lead us in new paths to bring healing to the world. Amen.