Worship Resources for November 13, 2016—Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 12 or 65:17-25 or Malachi 4:1-2a; Psalm 98; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-9

Narrative Lectionary: God Calls Isaiah, Isaiah 6:1-8 (Luke 5:8-10)

Isaiah 12 (an alternative psalm choice) is a psalm embedded in the prophet Isaiah’s work, singing praises to God who forgives, who turns back, who brings comfort. The writer sings praise to God in whom is found salvation. The works of God ought to be told to the nations, so that all will praise God.

Isaiah 65:17-25 contains the prophet’s vision of a new heaven and a new earth, where the ways of this world no longer have a hold on us. The prophet envisions a time when everyone enjoys what they have worked for, where the struggle of this world disappears and untimely death is no more. This vision is of peace and prosperity, of hope for all, where there is no domination, despair, and exile.

The prophet Malachi speaks judgment like a fire that consumes and burns all that is evil. There will be no root or branch so that it can take hold again. Instead, the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings (quoted in “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”)

Psalm 98 (also an alternate psalm choice on November 6th) is a song of praise and joy to God in this congregational call to worship. Victory has been achieved and attributed to God, and all the earth rejoices in the work of God among God’s people.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 is a specific warning against those who feel entitled. In the beginning, there was a utopian ideal of sharing in the work and goods together (Acts 2:42-47) but as the church has gone on, the writer warns about those who are lazy and do not work for what they eat—in other words, they feel entitled because they are Christians. Rather, because they are Christians they need to share in the workload for the good of all.

Jesus warns against idolizing the things of this world that are temporary in Luke 21:5-19. As the disciples marvel at the stones of the temple, Jesus tells them that not one of them will be left standing up. He warns that they will hear of revolutions and wars and to not get caught up in those causes, either, because they are worldly causes of restoring worldly kingdoms, not looking to the kingdom of God. Instead, Jesus encourages them to persevere and endure, knowing that the things of this world will pass away, including their adversaries, if they endure to the end.

The Narrative Lectionary looks to the Call of the Prophet Isaiah in 6:1-8. Isaiah beholds a heavenly vision of the cherubim praising God, and Isaiah whines that he isn’t good enough. His lips are not worthy to speak. So a cherub takes a burning coal and touches them to his lips (burning/fire are symbols of purifying) and Isaiah is made clean, purified, ready to speak for God. God says, “Who shall I send?” and Isaiah replies, “Pick me!”

Peter has a similar reaction to recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah, sent by God, in Luke 5:8-10. “Get away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” he shouts. But Jesus says, “Don’t be afraid.” In other words, God didn’t choose us because we are perfect, but because we are flawed, and fully human.

The things of this world that we make are temporary, and that includes our mistakes. What God has made and offers to us is eternal. God has made us as eternal beings, but we continue to live in the here and now for the things that only last here and now. If we look to the reign of God, the beloved community, the heavenly kingdom—the things that concern us now pass away. People matter, relationships matter, but worldly success and fortune is easily taken from us. Isaiah points to a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, where we enjoy life, where nothing can be taken from us because the things that matter are eternal.

Call to Worship (from Psalm 98:4-7)

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

 **Break forth into joyous song and sing praises!**

Sing praises to the Lord with instruments and melody,

 **Make a joyful noise to the Lord, the ruler of the earth.**

Let the world and those who live in it,

 **Sing praise to God with shouts of joy!**

Come, worship our God, who reigns forever;

 **Come, worship God with songs of gladness and thanksgiving!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Eternal God, Source of Life, we confess that we are short-sighted. We allow grudges to grow and fester rather than seeking Your healing. We seek the things that make us feel better and ignore the needs of others. In doing so, we ignore the eternal nature of our relationships with one another and with You. Forgive us for our selfishness and carelessness. Urge us to seek forgiveness, healing, and wholeness, to love our neighbor as ourselves and seek their well-being. In doing so, we secure our own health and wellness, and build up the kingdom, the beloved community here on earth as it is in heaven. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God has made a beautiful earth, and God has made a beautiful you. Embrace your beauty, and the power of God’s love in you for your neighbors and for this earth. Seek paths of healing and reconciliation. Know that your sins are forgiven, and set yourselves on the paths of justice, mercy, and loving-kindness. Amen.

Prayer

Spirit of Life, we come before You in this season of thankfulness, in this time of particular notice of the earth’s turning, golden blazing autumn in the northern part of the earth, beautiful budding spring in the southern reaches. All things turn and move and breathe, and we give You thanks for this planet that is our home. Help us to guard its care, to tend to its needs, to fulfill Your call on us to be good stewards of all You have given us. In the name of Christ, our Great Physician, our Loving Shepherd, our brother in humanity and Savior of All. Amen.