Worship Resources for November 15th—Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 1:4-10 (1 Samuel 2:1-0) or Daniel 12:1-3; Psalm 16; Hebrews 10:11-25; Mark 13:1-8

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

As we near the end of this season, we have come full circle. We began the season with Saul and later King David; now we read of the prophet Samuel’s parents, Hannah and Elkanah, and how Hannah prayed for a child, promising to dedicate the child before God. Samuel will become the prophet that will anoint both Saul and later David as king. In the selection from chapter 2 (which can be used as an alternative for the Psalm reading), Hannah’s petition has been granted, and she has been given a son, and she declares her praise to God who executes justice and hears the cries of the poor. Hannah’s song is echoed by Mary when she is pregnant with Jesus in Luke 1.

Daniel 12:1-3 speaks of the resurrection of the dead, a promise to the people of Israel who had faced destruction and desolation. Much of the second half of Daniel was written during the Greek persecution of the Jews, and Daniel gives a message of hope to those who have remained faithful to God. Though many have died, they will rise, becoming awake to everlasting life.

Psalm 16 is a prayer for God’s protection, assurance that for those who remain faithful to God, God will lead them into the path of life. Bless God, and God will give you instruction and counsel, sings the psalmist. Those that follow other gods will be disappointed and dejected, whereas those who follow God and God’s ways will find joy and the fullness of life.

Hebrews 10:11-25 completes the selections from Hebrews over the past few weeks. The writer concludes their thesis that Jesus is both the High Priest and Final Sacrifice. In Jesus there is the forgiveness of sins and all may enter the sanctuary of God because of Christ’s sacrifice. The writer concludes this portion with words of encouragement to do good deeds, because in Christ we are made clean, and until the Day of the Lord comes, we are called to do God’s work here on earth.

Mark 13:1-8 contains the conclusion of Jesus’ time in the temple before his death. In this moment, the disciples remark about the temple buildings and Jesus tells them that not one stone will remain. Forty years after the time of Jesus, the temple will be destroyed in the Jewish revolt against Rome. Jesus tells his disciples (and the hearers of Mark’s Gospel, which, according to most scholars, would have been written soon after the destruction of the temple) to not worry or be alarmed, this is not the end but the beginning “of the birthpangs,” which indicates that while painful, God is doing something new.

The Narrative Lectionary looks to the prophet Hosea, whose whole family life becomes a metaphor for God’s relationship with Israel when he marries Gomer who is a prostitute. In the beginning, the metaphors used between God and Israel are of marriage, but in chapter 11, the metaphor turns to a parent with a small child who keeps going astray, but the parent still loves them, and can never forget them. Even though God is angry with the people, God still loves them as children.

Jesus calls forth the children in Mark 10:13-14 after the disciples try to keep the children away. Jesus reminds the disciples that children, full of wonder and awe, are to whom the kingdom of God belongs, and we ought to become like them.

God is doing something new, and the old ways will not work any more—the old ways of sacrifice for atonement, the old ways of violence—God is birthing something new. However, the process is painful to let go of the old ways and embrace the new. God speaks in Isaiah 42:14 as a woman in labor who will gasp and pant. This is what it means to go through the end—whether it be the Day of the Lord, or the day of destruction—God is doing something new, but it takes time, and it is painful, and we lose what we once knew—but it is worth it. We gain so much more.

Call to Worship

Come, join in the work of our God;

**Worship God by serving those in need.**

Come, join in the movement of our God;

**Worship God by seeking justice and peace.**

Come, join in the hope of our God;

**Worship God by becoming living hope to the world.**

Come, join in this time of worship:

**Worship God with gladness and thanksgiving, who leads us into life everlasting.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Justice and Mercy, we come to You confessing that we have failed to show justice and mercy to others. We have failed to forgive; we have failed to be compassionate. We have at times put our feelings above the real needs of others. We have let our pride get in the way of helping those that we feel do not deserve it. We have judged others unfairly and harshly. Forgive us of our sins, and may we forgive others who do the same. Give us hearts that break open for the world, that show compassion and mercy, that seek justice and reconciliation. In the name of Christ, we pray for the courage to do these things. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon (from Hebrews 10:23)

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.” May we remain steadfast in our love for God, knowing that God’s love and forgiveness endures forever. God has forgiven us, once for all, and continues to lead us into right paths that lead to everlasting life. Know that you are forgiven, and go forth serving God by serving the world, in love and good deeds. Amen.

Prayer

God of Dusk and Dawn, lead us gently from the past into the future, rooted in our traditions and yet embracing what may come. The world is changing around us, and something new is being born in our faith. The church is changing into something new. It is fearful, and it is wonderful. Give us courage and strength to face the newness, knowing that Your love endures forever. As the sun sets, we know the sun will rise, and a new day will come. We give you thanks and praise that we are given the opportunity to serve in this time, to see what You are birthing in the world. We will be forever changed, but Your love will remain with us always. May we do the work You have called us to do with the assurance that You will continue to remain with us, until the end of time. Amen.