Worship Resources for December 27th, 2015: First Sunday of Christmas

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Narrative Lectionary: Beginning of Good News: Mark 1:1-20 (Psalm 91:9-12)

We begin with the ministry of Samuel, a young boy, a promised child to Hannah and Elkanah. Hannah had promised God that if she had a son, she would dedicate him to God, and once he was weaned he was brought to the temple. Hannah visited him every year with a new robe, but it must have been so hard to leave her only son behind.

Psalm 148 sings praise to God who is the creator of the heavens and the earth. All of creation, including the stars, praise God—the stars by shining, the sun and moon by showing light. Even the tall cedars praise God by growing tall. Everything, and everyone, are made to praise God, the creator of all.

The writer of Colossians 3:12-17 urges followers of Christ to be clothed in love—in other words, let love be the first thing others see and experience of you. Let the word of God dwell inside, and the peace of Christ be in your hearts, and be thankful. Forgive, be kind and compassionate, and give thanks to God for all things.

Luke 2:41-52 is the only story we have in our Bibles of Jesus as a child, no longer a baby. When Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem for Passover, as they did every year, they brought Jesus with them—but when they left, they didn’t realize Jesus was no longer among them until they were well outside of Jerusalem. It took them three days to find him, sitting back in the temple, teaching the teachers. They were worried sick, but Jesus asked them, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (vs. 49). Though they didn’t understand, and Jesus was obedient after that, we are told that Mary treasured all these things in her heart, just as she did after the shepherds came to visit.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Mark’s Gospel account. Mark begins with a passage from Isaiah, and leads in to John the Baptist and his ministry of repentance and baptism. Jesus comes to John to be baptized, and in Mark’s plain, to-the-point storytelling, he was driven into the wilderness immediately afterwards, tempted by Satan, and waited upon by angels. There are no stories of what the temptations are. Mark gets to the point—and after the time in the wilderness, Jesus comes out and preaches a similar sermon to John, and calls his first disciples to come and fish for people.

Psalm 91:9-12 is the scripture that Satan quotes to Jesus (but not in Mark’s account, that the Narrative Lectionary is using), that God will deliver those who are faithful to God and will not let harm come to them. Satan uses this passage in Matthew and Luke to try to tempt Jesus to test God, but Jesus refuses.

In this Christmas season, we remember the joy and wonder through the eyes of a child, but also that not every child’s life is joyful. We don’t know what it was like for Samuel, but we can imagine he must have been sad when his parents left, year after year. And while Jesus seems to have had, for the most part, an uneventful childhood, we know his parents must have been completely anxious, wondering what happened to him. Jesus himself does not seem to be distressed, but seems to know that there is more to his life than what his parents understand. We celebrate Christ’s birth, but also know that the world still needs to be transformed by God’s love. The work of Christ is not finished in us yet.

Call to Worship

We praise God who made the heavens and earth!

**We praise God who has given us salvation through Jesus Christ.**

We praise God who calls forth life from stardust and ashes;

**We praise God who has given us eternal life in Jesus Christ.**

We praise God who made us, and gave us hearts to love;

**We praise God whose love reigns in us because of Jesus Christ.**

Come, worship our God, who is the creator of all things:

**Worship Christ, the new-born King!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

We come to You, O God, knowing that not all children are joyful in this time of year, not all families have a safe place to lay their head, not all parents know where their children are. We pray for Your comfort, Your strength, and Your peace, to work through us as we live out Your ways of justice and mercy in the world. In the name of Jesus, a homeless baby, a lost child, a dying son, and our Living Savior, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God renews us, day by day. God gives us hope, day by day. God love us, each and every moment. You are loved, and you are forgiven. Go, and live into God’s good news, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer

Spirit of Life, as we approach the New Year, help us to live into hope, to anticipate Your coming into our world and lives in a new way. May we be prepared to work for justice in this new year, to be in solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalized. May we be ready to see You at work in the world around us and to participate fully in Your reign here on earth as it is in heaven. May we seek to serve You, in all we say and do, as we look forward to this new year with hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen.