Worship Resources for February 10, 2019—Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13); Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11

Narrative Lectionary: The Golden Rule, Matthew 7:1-14, 24-29 (Psalm 37:16-18)

In the Hebrew Scripture reading, last week we had the call of Jeremiah, and this week, the call of Isaiah as God’s prophet. In the year King Uzziah died (scholars have pinpointed this to around 742 B.C.E.), Isaiah beheld a vision of God seated upon the throne in the temple. God is accompanied by the six-winged seraphs, who declare God is holy. Isaiah cries out that he is not worthy to behold such a vision, and one of the seraphs touches a coal to his lips, purifying his lips so he may speak before God. When God says, “Who will go, whom shall I send?” Isaiah replies, “Here am I.” God tells Isaiah what to say, that the people will not understand. God speaks of sending the people away, foreshadowing the exile, before the people will listen and comprehend.

The psalmist gives thanks to God before all other gods in Psalm 138. God has answered the psalmist’s prayers, and God’s words have been heard by the kings of the earth. In a similar image to Psalm 23, the psalmist proclaims that when they walk in the midst of trouble, God keeps them safe from the wrath of their enemies, and God’s right hand delivers them. God is at work in the life of the psalmist, and God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians continues with chapter 15. This was a church that struggled with many divisions. Here, Paul has turned from his discourse on spiritual gifts and love to his final point, that he is reminding them of the good news he proclaimed to them before: that Christ died for their sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day in accordance with scripture. Moreover, Christ appeared to the disciples, to many of the early believers, and lastly to Paul. This is the gospel that the church in Corinth has come to believe.

Jesus’ call of the first disciples in Luke 5:1-11 is slightly different than in the other Gospel accounts. In Luke’s account, Jesus gets into Simon’s boat, and he sits down in the boat to teach the crowds on the shore. In Matthew and Mark, crowds have not gathered yet to him. In this account, Simon manages to catch so many fish that the net he’s using almost breaks, and Simon tells Jesus to go away, because Simon is a sinful man. In this account, Simon seems to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah, or at least a prophet sent by God. James and John are fishing partners with Simon, and they also witness what happens, and they leave their boats to follow him.

The Narrative Lectionary concludes Jesus’ discourse from the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 7, with Jesus’ practical teachings, especially the Golden Rule. Do not judge, or you’ll be judged. Don’t give what is holy to the dogs. Everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The wise receive these words and build their lives upon them, but the foolish let them go in one ear and out the other. The crowds were astonished at Jesus’ teaching, because he taught as one having authority.

Psalm 37:16-18 contains a proverb of wisdom teaching: it’s better to be righteous and not have much, than to be wicked and have a lot, for God upholds the righteous. Those who are blameless, who are righteous, walk with God all their days.

To follow the call of God is not an easy one, but the wise perceive and understand God’s ways. God leads us away from the ways of the world that secure wealth and power. Instead, we are led into a deeper way of loving one another. We are taught a better way of life, of not judging but listening, of showing kindness and mercy to others, and trusting in God through Jesus Christ.

Call to Worship (from Matthew 7:7-8, 12)

Ask, and it will be given you;

 **Search, and you will find.**

Knock, and the door will be opened for you;

 **For everyone who searches and knocks, the door will be opened.**

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you;

 **For this is the law, the prophets, and all of Scripture.**

Come, join in worship, and enter the fellowship of God;

 **God is welcoming all of us by the presence of the Holy Spirit.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God Who Calls, we confess that we are not always listening. We jump ahead without thinking. We move forward without discernment. We want to lead without prayerfully seeking Your wisdom and ways. Forgive us for our impatience. Forgive us for our selfishness. Cultivate in us a listening heart. Inspire in us the desire to learn more from others. Lead us in Your ways of wisdom. Help us to cast off the busy-ness of this world, the rapid pace and driven attitudes, and instead, help us to adopt Your grace, mercy, and kindness, in how we respond to others, to the needs of the world, and in following You, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

The steadfast love of God endures forever. Forever. Eternity begins now, in this moment. Slow down from the world, and seek God’s soulful pace. Know that the Holy Spirit is working in you, now and always, and the love of Christ leads you on. You are forgiven, loved, and restored. Amen.

Prayer

Almighty Wisdom, may we seek You instead of the quick fixes of the world. May seek the ways of understanding and knowledge rather than the quick internet search, the sharp meme, the link to the Snopes article. May we question the battles we are engaging, and instead seek the deeper way. May we remember the seven billion people of this earth rather than the one internet troll that drags us down. May we remember the beating hearts of children in places like Syria and Yemen rather than only the headlines of newspapers. Call us into Your ways of love, justice, mercy, and peace. For you are the only Wise God, our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.