Worship Resources for February 21st, 2016—Second Sunday in Lent

Revised Common Lectionary: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35 or Luke 9:28-43a

Narrative Lectionary: Bartimaeus Healed, Mark 10:32-52 (Psalm 34:11-14)

In Genesis 15, Abram cries out to God, because he and Sarai have remained childless, and Abram is concerned about who will inherit. How will Abram pass down to the next generation, when there is none? God speaks to Abram, brings him outside and has him look at the stars, because the descendants of Abram will be just as uncountable. God also promises to Abram that he will possess the land, and makes a covenant with Abram.

Psalm 27 sings of having courage in God. The psalmist sings of not being afraid, even when enemies are near. The psalmist is confident of God’s presence, assured that God will not let them down. They are certain that in the end, God will prevail, and goodness will prevail. Take heart, have courage in God.

In Philippians 3:17-4:1, Paul speaks to the church in Philippi to look to him as an example, because there are others who claim to follow Christ but worship the god of the “belly,” looking to satisfy their worldly desires. Paul reminds the faithful that they have their citizenship in heaven, and are expecting their savior, Jesus, who will transform all to conform to him.

The first selection for the Gospel reading is Luke 13:31-35. This passage is a good reminder that not all Pharisees were actively against Jesus, that others (such as Nicodemus in John 3) saw him as a rabbi sent from God, and these Pharisees here warn Jesus that Herod wants to kill him. Jesus speaks out against Herod, the puppet ruler of Judea under the Roman government, because Jesus is doing the work of God, not the work of the oppressors. Jesus laments over Jerusalem, remembering the prophets who have been killed before, because the ones in power would not listen. Jesus uses the image of a mother hen gathering her chicks to show his desire of wanting to gather the children (whether young, or a term of referring to the innocent) together, but Jesus will not return to Jerusalem, until he enters it one last time.

The second selection is the Transfiguration, which is often read on the Sunday before Lent. This passage contains both the account of the Transfiguration and what happened the next day. In Luke’s account, Jesus has taken Peter, John and James up the mountain to pray. While they are there, Jesus’ clothes become dazzling white and the appearance of his face changes. Peter, James and John are “weighed down with sleep” but stay awake for this, as Moses and Elijah come to talk with Jesus. Peter, of course, wants to immediately make tents for the three, and Luke’s account reads that Peter didn’t know what he was saying. When the voice comes from the cloud, in Luke’s account Jesus is referred to as “my Son, my Chosen.” Once the voice has spoken, Jesus was found to be alone. The next day, a man comes to Jesus begging him to look at his son who has a spirit that causes seizures, but the disciples weren’t able to do anything about it. Jesus condemns the “faithless and perverse generation” and heals the boy. The man had not been able to find help, even among the disciples, and had begged Jesus to take a look at his boy. The disciples had already forgotten what they had experienced on the mountain.

The Narrative Lectionary begins with Jesus speaking about his death and resurrection for the third time in Mark’s Gospel account, beginning at 10:32. Then James and John ask Jesus if they can sit at his right and left hand—obviously missing the point of what Jesus had just told them about giving his life. The rest of the disciples are pretty upset with James and John for not getting it, but Jesus reminds them all that the first must become last, and that the greatest will become the servant of all. Finally, as the disciples and Jesus enter Jericho, a blind man named Bartimaeus cries out for Jesus to have mercy on him. When Jesus finally calls to him, after Bartimaeus was told to be quiet by others, he tells Jesus, “Let me see again!” Jesus tells him that his faith has made him well, and immediately he regains his sight and follows Jesus.

Psalm 34:11-14 contains words of wisdom: do not speak evil, and don’t deceive others. Depart from evil, do good, and seek peace. For those who desire long lives, this is the advice of the psalmist.

Persevering in God is not easy. Abram waited far too long, but God’s promises came through. Paul encouraged the church in Philippi to endure by looking to him as a model, and not those who live in the way of the world. Bartimaeus perseveres when others ignore him and deliberately try to keep him at the margins. And Jesus perseveres even in the face of persecution and the threat of death. Faith helps us to endure, to know that we are citizens of heaven, and we are called to conform to God and not the ways of the world.

Call to Worship (from Psalm 27)

The Lord is our light and our salvation;

**Whom shall we fear?**

The Lord is the stronghold of our lives;

**Of whom shall we be afraid?**

Though we may feel alone and forsaken at times,

**God is with us, and will lead us on.**

We believe we will see the goodness of our God,

**We know the Lord is present with us in this time of worship.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy One, we confess that we have followed the ways of the world, worshipped the idols that promise worldly satisfaction, wealth and fame. We have not love those on the margins, and we have failed to work to end oppression and injustice. Forgive our narrow-mindedness, our short-sightedness. Call us back into Your ways, looking to Jesus our Savior as our model and example. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Opportunities to participate in God’s justice abound. Chances to love our neighbor and care for those on the margins are all around. Instances in which we can know we are forgiven are too numerous to count. God’s love knows no measure, no bounds. Go, knowing you are loved and forgiven, and participate in the world we are in by living in the ways of the heavenly kingdom, caring for all of God’s children. Amen.

Prayer

Author of Life, write into our hearts Your ways, because the ways of his world have stolen the pages. The ways of this world have put us at the center, written us as heroes, made us feel as if all things good are supposed to happen for us. Tear out the rubbish of this world, and remind us that You are the one who writes our story, You are the one who calls us to live for others and not for ourselves, to care for the lost and least and to serve one another. Remind us that the ways of this world are not Your ways, for Your ways call us into love, justice, and mercy, by serving one another. In the name of Christ, the Logos, the Word, we pray. Amen.