Worship Resources for February 8th, 2015—Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

Narrative Lectionary: Feeding 5000, Matthew 14:13-33 (Psalm 95:1-5)

We hear these words of assurance through the prophet Isaiah, that the same God who calls prophets called forth creation at its foundation and continues to give strength to the weak, voice to the voiceless and empowers the disenfranchised. God is the one bringing the remnant—the survivors—out of exile and will renew their strength, as with the wings of eagles.

Psalm 147 sings the praises of God who binds up the brokenhearted, gathers the outcasts, and brings in the marginalized. God cares for all of creation and provides for all the creatures, and God cares for all of the people. God is not impressed with feats of strength or greatness, but rather humility and awe of God.

1 Corinthians 9:16-23 is Paul’s declaration that proclaiming the Gospel is reward in itself, and that he does not do this for his own gain. He has joined with all people, participating in their customs and traditions rather than trying to change them, to share the love of God in Christ Jesus, so that the Gospel may become known to all people. Though Paul declares one does not need to be under the law, he will do so if it means solidarity with those for whom the law of Moses is important. Paul has become all things to all people, rather than siding with one against the other.

In Mark 1:29-39 we continue following Jesus’ early days of his ministry. At this point, we only know of James and John and Simon and Andrew being Jesus’ disciples. Simon must have been married, because his mother-in-law is ill in this passage, and Jesus goes to her and heals her. The whole city begins to bring all of their sick and those possessed by demons to him, and afterwards, in the early morning, he goes off and prays by himself. Even Jesus needed some down time away. But before long, the disciples come and find him, and Jesus declares they must go to other towns and preach the good news. They could have stayed in that one town, but Jesus was called to bring Good News to the whole world.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on water in Matthew’s version. The story of the feeding of the 5000 is very similar to the Synoptic Gospels; the story of Jesus walking on water is slightly different from the version in Mark and John (Luke does not have this story). In Matthew’s version, Jesus not only appears walking on the water, but after telling them “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid,” Peter gets out of the boat and begins to walk to him. But the minute Peter notices the strong wind, his faith waivers and he begins to sink. When the disciples had little to give to the hungry ground, Jesus helped to increase their faith by sharing the little they had. In this instance, Peter starts out with great faith, but it sinks when fear enters in—even though Jesus just said “do not be afraid.”

Psalm 95:1-5 reminds us that God is the God of creation, and that all things sing the praises of God, animate and inanimate. Make a joyful noise to the King above all kings, the Creator of all things!

At times we all go through times of doubt, but we also go through times of being weary and downtrodden. We need to be lifted up. God assures us that we will be, that our spirits will be renewed. We know the valley of the shadow does not last forever, and that God will comfort us and lead us to green pastures and still waters. But in that time, we may feel darkness, despair, or simply exhaustion. We get tired on the faith journey, and sometimes we need to take time out and rest in order to be renewed.

Call to Worship

Come to Jesus, all you who are weary and heavy laden,

 **Come and find rest and renewal here.**

Come to Jesus, all you who have been worn out and tired,

 **Come and find strength and refreshment in the Spirit.**

Come to Jesus, all you who feel the weight of the world on your shoulders,

 **Come and be filled with Christ, who renews our spirits.**

 **Come and worship, and be raised up in Christ. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Spirit of Life, we confess that at times we are worn down and weary. We are exhausted. We are running from one thing to the next and we just do not have time anymore. We barely have time for ourselves, if we have time for anyone, including our families and friends and those close to us. Forgive us for running ourselves ragged. Forgive us for putting busy-ness above time spent with each other. Forgive us for not living by Your example, taking time for prayer and rest. Call us into Your ways of love and peace, and help us to put our trust in You for rest and renewal of our hearts. In the name of Christ, who takes up our burdens, we pray all things. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God is love. Those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Abide in God’s love, and abide in your love for one another. There is always time for love. There is always time for relationship. There is always time for forgiveness. There is always time for peace. Live into God’s ways, and know that you are forgiven, loved and restored. Amen.

Prayer

Creator God, You created the world and all that is in it. You have provided food for all plants and creatures and have given us an abundance, but we have not been good stewards of all of our resources in You. We have not been good stewards of our own bodies, our own selves, and have worn our minds into tiredness and bodies into exhaustion. Renew our spirits. Help us to take time to reconnect with You and with one another. Remind us that You are always creating something new, You are always doing a new thing in us. May we live into that newness. May we feel Your renewal in us and be lifted up. In the name of Christ, who was raised and raises us up, we pray. Amen.