Worship Resources for March 27th, 2016—Easter Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 65:17-25 or Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 (or Acts 10:34-43); John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12

Narrative Lectionary: Resurrection, Mark 16:1-8 (Psalm 118:21-27)

The prophet Isaiah speaks of a time when God creates Jerusalem in a new way, in a place where people will no longer be taken from their homes, and there will be no more mourning or tears shed. They will be children of God, blessed by God with joy, and even among the creatures, there will be peace between the wolf and the lamb, and the lion will no longer search for prey. There will be no more pain or violence or destruction, when God creates anew.

Acts 10:34-43 (also an alternative reading for the Epistle reading) is part of the traditional readings for Easter Sunday, Peter’s proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord of All, who has come for all nations and all peoples. He was put to death, but raised on the third day, and that all who believe in him receive forgiveness of sins.

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 sings that God’s steadfast love endures beyond this life into eternal life. The gate of the Lord is opened because God has opened it, and the righteous may enter and praise God, who is our salvation.

1 Corinthians 15:19-26 speaks of Christ’s reign, and that in Christ we have the resurrection of the dead. Christ will reign until all enemies are under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death *(a side note: this passage is quoted on the tombstone of Harry Potter’s parents in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows).*

John’s account of the Resurrection is that it began while it was still dark on the first day of the week, and it is Mary Magdalene, by herself, who comes to the tomb and finds the stone removed. She tells the disciples, but Peter and “the beloved disciple” are the ones who go in, with Peter going in first, although “the beloved disciple” actually outran him. The disciples return home, but Mary remains, weeping in the garden, and mistakes Jesus for the gardener until he says her name. She is the first to experience the Risen Christ, the first to proclaim she has seen him, and the first to tell the other disciples.

Luke’s account of the Resurrection is at early dawn, and it includes Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women who followed Jesus. The stone is found rolled away, and there are two men in dazzling white clothes who tell the women that Jesus has risen. When the women tell the disciples, they do not believe them, although Peter does go look at the empty tomb.

The Narrative Lectionary looks to Mark’s account of the Resurrection, which takes place when the sun has risen. Mark lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The stone again has been rolled away, but when they look inside, they find one man dressed in white. When the man tells them to go to Peter, they run away, and say nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This selection from Psalm 118 overlaps today’s Revised Common Lectionary reading as well as the reading from last week. The psalmist praises God for choosing the rejected ones, and God is the one who brings light. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the one rejected by others, rejected by the world.

The Resurrection reminds us that God is the one with the final word. There is nothing done that cannot be undone by God; not even death is final. Death is the last enemy that will be defeated, along with sin, violence, hatred—everything that can separate us from God is defeated at the resurrection. The tomb is empty, the door from death to life opened forever, through Christ Jesus.

Call to Worship

Christ is not among the dead;

**Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!**

Remember, he told you all these things must pass;

**Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!**

The tomb is empty; death does not have the final word!

**Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!**

Love Wins! Life Wins! Christ reigns forever!

**Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Life, we come to You admitting our own fault lines and cracks, the places where we fall apart. At times we cannot embrace the life You have given to us because of the sins in the world. Oppression and racism prevail. Hate and hunger control us. Redeem us and free us from the sin of the world through Your love, and call us to the work of justice and redemption for all, in the name of Christ Jesus, who has conquered death and sin forever. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God is doing something new in us. There is new life all around; can you not perceive it? Know that there is nothing that will separate you from God’s love, and we are called to help bring forth God’s love and justice in this world in new ways. Participate in the reign of God by loving others, and God will do something new in all of us. Amen.

Prayer

Author of Salvation, You have written into our hearts the Word of Life, and the Word is Jesus Christ. Through Christ we have new life now that leads to eternal life. We praise You, for we are fearfully and wonderfully made in Your image, and the image of Love lives in us. May we imitate Christ in his love for all, and in the work of justice and mercy, to participate in Your reign here on earth as it is in heaven, now and forevermore. Amen.