Worship Resources for April 1, 2018—Easter Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43; Mark 16:1-8 or John 20:1-18

Narrative Lectionary: Resurrection, John 20:1-18 (Psalm 118:21-29)

We begin the Easter readings from the Revised Common Lectionary with the revelation to Peter in Acts 10:34-43. Right before this passage, Peter beheld a vision from God, in which God called him to eat foods that had once been called unclean. The vision was in preparation for meeting Cornelius, a Roman Centurion. Peter understands in this moment that Christ came for all—Jew and Gentile. Christ came to erase the division of what was unclean. Peter proclaims that the message of Christ is for all, that Christ died for all, and all have forgiveness of sins through his name.

The prophet Isaiah beholds a vision of the banquet table of God in Isaiah 25:6-9. On this table provided by God are rich foods and wines, and all people are invited. God will swallow up death forever and there will be no more mourning, no more suffering and shame for the people. All the people will rejoice with God, who they have waited for.

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 overlaps with the Psalm reading for Palm Sunday. A call to praise God upon entering the temple, this processional psalm praises God for answering prayers, delivering the people from their enemies, and proclaiming that there is life in God and that God is the people’s salvation.

Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 that he has proclaimed the good news that he received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with scripture, was buried, and raised on the third day. Paul goes through all the people Christ appeared to, and last of all, to him. Paul reveals that he unfit to be called an apostle because he once persecuted the church, but now, God has made him into what he has become, and that all those who have witnessed Christ are called to proclaim so that others will come to believe.

Mark’s account is short and to the point. It is early on the first day of the week, but the sun had already risen. Mary Magdalene is with Mary the mother of James, and Salome, and they have brought spices to anoint Jesus’ body. However, they don’t know who will be able to roll the stone away. When they arrive, they find the stone has already been rolled back, and a young man dressed in a white robe who tells them that Jesus of Nazareth is not there, that he has been raised, and they are to go tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus has gone ahead of them to Galilee. But in Mark’s version, terror and amazement seized them and they run off, saying nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. In most Bibles, one will find additional verses including a shorter ending and a longer ending to Mark, plus another verse—all of these are believed to be later additions. The shorter ending to the earliest gospel account leaves the reader wondering: what happened next?

Both an alternative to the Revised Common Lectionary and the text for the Narrative Lectionary, in John’s account of the Resurrection, it is still dark when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb by herself and found the stone had been rolled away. When she tells the disciples, Peter and the unnamed beloved disciple run to the tomb and find it empty, only the linen wrappings remaining. The unnamed beloved disciple (only found in John’s account) believes, but the disciples return to their homes. Mary remains in the garden, weeping, and two angels speak to her, and then Jesus himself, but she doesn’t recognize him until he says her name. Then, following Jesus’ instructions, she returns to the disciples and declares she has seen the risen Lord.

The latter part of Psalm 118, part of the Narrative Lectionary readings, is the part of the processional taking place inside the temple. Blessing the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the psalmist recognizes that the rejected ones of Israel have now become the chief cornerstone, and God is worthy of praise, for God is good, and God’s steadfast love endures forever.

The heart of the Christian story is that death did not have the final word. The women, and then the disciples, went and told the good news of Christ’s resurrection. Their mourning was turned to rejoicing! God desires for us to know that death is not the dividing line. In Christ, we have new life, eternal life, where death and sin have no hold on us.

Call to Worship

The women wondered who would roll the stone from the tomb,

**But the stone was rolled away. Christ is Risen!**

The women went to see their friend’s body,

**But the body was not there. Christ is Risen!**

The angel told them “You are looking for Jesus who was crucified.”

**“He is not here!” Christ is Risen!**

Go, and tell the good news to the disciples!

**Go, and tell the Good News to the World! Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Life, we confess that our attention is drawn to things that do not bring life. We are focused on the stock market and trending news, celebrities and gossip. We are caught up of things in this world rather than the world’s needs. Call us back into Your ways of life, that include loving our neighbors as ourselves, meeting the needs of those around us, and contributing to Your Beloved Community on earth as it is in heaven, so that all might have life now. Call us to work for justice, to seek peace, and to extend mercy and grace to one another. In the name of Christ, who laid down his life so that all might have life, now and forever, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

By the grace of God, we have become children of God. We are beloved by God, and called to love one another. Know that forgiveness abounds, grace is plentiful, love wins, and life endures forever. Go, and share the Good News. Amen.

Prayer

Eternal One, Your love never waivers. You continue to give us new life, planting the seeds of hope. We see evidence of resurrection all around, in the blossoming buds of trees, and in young voices speaking truth. Help us to listen to Your voice that is coming to us in new and stronger ways, a voice that calls us to justice, mercy, and peace. Help us to see Your love at work, in the beauty around us. Help us to see Your love at work in the people who are coming together to stand for justice and truth. We heard Your voice through the prophets of old, and in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the witnesses of the women at the tomb, and we hear it again now. Your love never fails, and continues to grow. Help us to listen, learn, and love. Amen.