Worship Resources for April 10, 2016—Third Sunday of Easter

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 9:1-20; Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Narrative Lectionary: Peter Heals in Jerusalem, Acts 3:1-10 (Mark 6:53-56)

We begin with Luke’s version of Paul’s conversion experience (Luke also repeats this in Acts 22:1-21 and 26:2-23, and in each time, Paul tells it a little differently; Paul himself describes his past and conversion in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Galatians 1:13-17; and Philippians 3:4-9). Luke gives us a dramatic view of Saul’s encounter with Christ, questioning Saul, “why do you persecute me?” The story also shares that Ananias had great cause to fear Saul, but followed where God led him, to be with Saul, and pray with him and lay hands on him. Ananias extended grace, mercy, and forgiveness, because God called him to, not because Saul deserved it.

The psalmist sings praises to God in Psalm 30 for delivering the singer from illness and evil. The psalmist reminds God that they cannot praise God from the place of death, so therefore the psalmist praises God for their life, for their safety and deliverance.

Revelation 5:11-14 contains John of Patmos’ beautiful vision of heavenly worship, in which all peoples of all nations and languages gather around the throne to praise the Lamb, the one who gave himself for all, and therefore is worthy of all praise and glory.

John 21:1-19 is an addition to the Gospel according to John, for the end of chapter 20 is a fitting end to the book, but this was one more story, the commissioning of Peter to continue the ministry of Jesus. It is a story that shows that the disciples tried to go back to their old life of fishing, but they could not (and they caught nothing, until they saw Jesus). The disciples could not go back to their old ways, but must instead follow the call of Christ into something new—to feed Jesus’ sheep, to continue the ministry Jesus began with them.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on Acts 3, and the healing of a disabled beggar by Peter and John. The man was forced to beg because the disabled were not given work. Instead of giving him gold or silver to help him, Peter heals him in the name of Jesus, so that the man no longer has to beg. Healing stories of Jesus and the disciples are not “curing” of illness and disease, but rather bring healing to the whole person, as with this man, who goes forth praising God, and all the people recognize him as one who used to beg, but no longer has to.

Mark 6:53-56 are a few short verses about Jesus’ healing ministry in Gennesaret. The people recognize Jesus as soon as he lands in the boat, and begin to bring him all the people they know who are sick to be healed. They beg to even be allowed to touch the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed (vs. 56).

Once we have encountered God through Jesus Christ, we cannot go back to the way we used to be. We are not the same person. We have been transformed. Paul experienced a life-changing conversion. The disciples tried to go back, including Peter, but found they could not be who they used to be. And for others—the encounter with Christ is so transformative they find healing, wholeness, new life. We speak often of eternal life through Christ, especially in this Eastertide, but it is clear in the Scriptures that Christ offers us new life now, a life that begins now and is eternal.

Call to Worship

Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?”

 **We must ask ourselves, “Do we love God?”**

Jesus told Peter, “Feed my sheep.”

 **We must answer Christ’s call to care for others.**

Jesus calls to the disciples, “Follow me.”

 **May we listen, answer, and follow the call of Christ in this time of worship.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy Jesus, we confess that we have run away. We confess that we have tried to hide from You. We confess we have turned up the noise of the world so we don’t have to hear You, or hear the cries of injustice, the pain of oppression, the loneliness of marginalization. Forgive us for trying to follow our own way, to seek only our well-being. Call us back to Your ways of seeking justice, sharing in Your loving-kindness, and journeying in humility with You. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

We cannot turn back, but we do not go forward alone. Jesus has called us to new life, and has called us to be part of the body of Christ, of which we all are a part. You are not on this journey alone. Reach out to others to help, and they will reach out to help you. Forgive those along the way, and you will be forgiven. Love others, and know that the love of Christ is already with you. Amen.

Prayer

Eternal One, You call us forth out of light and dust, into the movement of the universe. For this time we have now, we hear Your call to love, forgive, bless, and work together. Wake us up, to know that justice needs to be done. Wake us up, to know that forgiveness needs to be given. Wake us up, to know that this world and the desires of wealth and success will fade fast, but Your love is new and never ends. Call us away from the temporary, into the eternal. In the name of Christ, who has shown us eternity in His love for us, we pray. Amen.