Worship Resources for April 14—Third Sunday of Easter

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

Acts 9 contains Luke’s account of the conversion of Saul (but you might compare the accounts with Acts 22:1-21 and 26:2-23, where some of the details get changed, and with Paul’s own mention of his conversion in Galatians 1). As we celebrate the Resurrection, we also recall the early church and how the Gospel spread throughout the land. The Gospel was life-changing, transformative. The Good News was shared among the Jews but many Gentiles also came to the faith along the way. The message of Jesus did not end at his death but was glorified at his resurrection, and this Gospel was not only life-changing for those who heard it the first time, but for those like Ananias who became early believers, they continued to witness miracles and life-changing events that shaped their own experience.

Psalm 30 is a song of praise for God’s deliverance—specifically for recovery after an illness. The psalmist sings of turning from mourning to dancing, from weeping to rejoicing. When we go through the darkest of times, God is with us, and though it is hard for us to see, we know that in God all things are made new. What is experienced is only temporary, and we know there will be good news—there will be rejoicing, there will be deliverance, for God is faithful.

John 21:1-19 is another favorite passage of Scripture. After the Resurrection, after Jesus has already appeared to the disciples, some of the disciples, especially Peter, seem to not know what to do next. “Now what?” Peter decides to go fishing. Fishing is what he used to do, part of who he used to be. Some of the others go with him. It is as if they are trying to go back to their old life. But they catch nothing until a stranger calls to them from the shore. Once they bring in the load of the miraculous catch, Peter proclaims, “It is the Lord!” Peter swims to shore, and Jesus cooks them breakfast—fish and bread. After this nourishing meal, it seems that the disciples realize that they cannot go back to who they used to be—because that life is empty. Rather, they need to go forward with the message of Christ’s love and salvation. Jesus asks Peter, “Do you love me?” three times. Perhaps this is countering the three denials of Peter, but perhaps it is also emphasizing that if we love Jesus, we cannot go back to the way we used to be. We must go out and seek the sheep and feed them. We cannot go back to only feeding ourselves.

Revelation 5:11-14 celebrates the diversity of God’s creation which rejoices in Christ Jesus, our salvation: “Worthy is the Lamb!” All of creation participates in the fullness of what God has promised. God’s good news is not just for us, though we are the ones who are receiving it; but God’s good news is for all the earth, and all the earth is participating in this rejoicing.

“Now what?” we might ask after Easter. “Now what?” We know that Jesus has come, lived and died and lives again. We believe he is the Messiah. We believe that in him we have eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. But now what? There are people who are hungry—we must go and feed them, we can’t be only worried about our own needs. There are people who are mourning, who are sad—we must go and be with them, to help bear their burdens. We must remember that the picture is greater than ourselves. Messages of personal salvation only go so far, to help us feel good about ourselves. Remembering that God’s purpose as Creator is new life, we must do our part to help in all of creation to nurture that new life.

Call to Worship

All of creation rejoices and sings

**Hallelujah! Christ is Risen!**

But the people look down, at themselves, at their own lives

**Look up, O People, and sing for joy!**

We are called to celebrate and share the Good News

**Hallelujah! Christ is Risen!**

Let us lift up our hearts to the Lord, Creator of Heaven and Earth

**Look up, O People, and sing for joy!**

Call out, sing out, share the Good News that Christ is Risen!

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

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy Creator, You have breathed in us Life, but we have exhaled little in return. We look down at our own problems, our worries and our own cares and think the problems in the world are too big. Call us away from our worries that freeze us and into the warmth of Your love that sends us forth. Help us to give out of what You have given us, so that every breath of life from You is given back into the life of others. Help us to grow Your community, Your culture, Your kingdom on earth. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon (from Psalm 30)

Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. God has lifted us up, brought us out of the darkness into the light. God turns our mourning into dancing. With time, we can see the fullness of God’s blessings in our lives. We are forgiven. We are given New Life in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Prayer

Loving Jesus, turn us away from the ways of the world that close us off, that tell us to pull back, that call us away from dreams and hopes. Turn us towards Your voice, for You call out to us as sheep who are lost, in need of a shepherd. Guide us on right paths. Help us not to fall into the traps of the world, traps of greed, lust, and envy. Call us into Your community, where we see each other as brothers and sisters, where we feel Your love in our lives and desire to share that love with one another. May we be bold to reach out in our faith, knowing by our faith You are with us and will never leave us. In Your precious name, Jesus, our Savior, Redeemer and Friend, we pray. Amen.