Worship Resources for April 16, 2017—Easter Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18 or Matthew 28:1-10

Narrative Lectionary: Luke 24:1-12 (Psalm 118:17, 21-24 or vs. 22)

Peter boldly declares God’s radical inclusive love after beholding a vision from God and an encounter with a centurion. Peter now understands that he is called to proclaim the good news of Christ’s death and resurrection for all people, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background. Peter and the others are witnesses to the events surrounding Christ’s death, as well as his resurrection, and they have been called to preach to the people that “he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.”

Jeremiah 31:1-6 speaks of the hope and promise of the return from exile, the love of God being an everlasting love. Once again, the people will plant in their land and will rejoice and celebrate. The families of Israel will be gathered together as God’s people.

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 overlaps with the selection from Palm Sunday. The psalmist proclaims as the people prepare to enter the gates that they shall not die, but they shall live, for this is the house of the Lord. God is the people’s strength and might, and their salvation.

Colossians 3:1-4 reminds the reader that if they have died with Christ they have been raised with Christ, and they ought to set their mind and live their life according to Christ, not according to the ways of the world.

(The selection from Acts may also be used for an epistle reading instead)

John’s account of the resurrection differs from the other three Gospel accounts in that it was still dark when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, and she was alone. When she discovers the stone was rolled away, she ran to tell Peter. Peter and the Beloved Disciple race to the tomb, see it empty, but only the Beloved Disciple sees and believes. However, Mary is the one who remains at the tomb, who weeps in the garden, and then, finally, recognizes that the man there is not the gardener, but is Jesus. She is the one who tells the disciples that Christ has risen, that she has seen him firsthand.

Matthew’s account of the Resurrection is similar to Mark and Luke in that Mary Magdalene is not alone, but has at least one other person with her (also named Mary), and it is as the day is dawning. In Matthew’s account, there is a great earthquake, the stone is rolled away by an angel who sits on the stone, and there are guards at the tomb, who are terrified. But the angel says, “Do not be afraid.” As the women run to tell the disciples, Jesus meets them on the way. They take hold of his feet and worship him, but he instructs them to go and tell his disciples in Galilee (for the disciples had already gone home!) and they will see Jesus there.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on Luke’s account, which has several of the women at the tomb at early dawn. There are two angels in Luke’s account, who tell the women that he is not there, he has been raised as he told them. However, in Luke’s account, the disciples do not believe the women, as it seems to them “an idle tale.”

Do not be afraid. He is not here, he has risen! Do not be afraid to hear good news in a world full of terrible, awful news. Do not be afraid to still hope and believe even when it seems all else has failed. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed!

Call to Worship

The women came to prepare his body,

**He was not there; he has risen!**

The disciples were huddled away in their grief,

**He was not there; he has risen!**

Some trembled in fear; still others doubted;

**He was not there, he has risen!**

But the angel said, “Do not be afraid,”

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

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

We confess our fears to You, O God. We confess that we are afraid of death. We are afraid of finality. We are afraid of not living into our dreams or satisfying our desires. We are afraid of not accomplishing what we set out to do. Forgive us for focusing on worldly values, Eternal God. Forgive us for focusing on worldly gain, God of Everlasting Love. Forgive us for not living into the trust that Your love reigns forever, and that death does not have the final word. May we rest assured in the promises of Your love through Your Son, Jesus the Christ who lived and died and lives again, for us all. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ will come again! We proclaim the ancient promise in our hearts, and may it settle there as truth, that we know in our heart of our hearts that God’s love endures forever. This world, this life may pass away, but God’s love endures forever because of Christ our Lord. Go, live into the Good News, and share God’s love with all. Amen.

Prayer

Almighty One, You called us into life on this planet long ago. Generations have come and gone, and still we search for meaning and seek a promise beyond this life, this world, for something greater. May we seek to love one another. May we seek to care for others. May we seek to change this world for the better for all, by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with You, our Savior, Redeemer, and Eternal Friend, Christ our Lord. Amen.