Worship Resources for April 19th, 2015—Third Sunday of Easter\*

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 3:12-19; Psalm 4; 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:36b-48

Narrative Lectionary: Peter’s Vision, Acts 10:1-17, 34-35 (Matthew 9:36-37)

\*can also be “Earth Sunday,” or April 26th. I have also created [Earth Day Creation Care resources here](http://rev-o-lution.org/2015/04/09/earth-day-creation-care-sunday-resources/).

Throughout the Easter season a reading from Acts is used in place of the Hebrew Scriptures, as we recall the formation of the early church after Christ’s Resurrection. Peter is addressing the crowd at the temple, who have witnessed Peter and John heal someone and this miracle has filled them with amazement and wonder. Peter tells the crowd it is because of Jesus that this has happened, the same Jesus the crowds rejected is the Messiah, and has been raised from the dead. Peter calls upon them to repent and believe, because these signs and miracles are happening in the name of Jesus.

Psalm 4 is a plea from the psalmist for God to answer and deliver. The singer sings on behalf of the people who are suffering, but also sings to the people to put their trust in God, for it is God who will keep them safe.

1 John 3:1-7 reminds us that we are all children of God, and that though we are all sinners, we need to turn away from sin for there is no sin in Christ. Sin is the distortion of relationship; Christ restores our relationship with God and with one another. In Christ we have new life.

Luke 24:36b-48 is the appearance of Christ to the disciples after the resurrection on Luke’s account. Following the two disciples on the road to Emmaus earlier in this chapter, Jesus appears before all of the disciples, as human as any of them, and hungry. Some doubt and cannot believe it is him, but he assures them he is not a ghost, it is him in the flesh. Jesus opens their minds to the scriptures so they understand, and tells them “You are witnesses of these things.”

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on Peter’s Vision in Acts 10, in which the vision of the kingdom of God is expanded beyond Peter’s previous experience. The kingdom of God is not limited to one people, but is open for all nations, for all people to be children of God and to participate in the reign of God. Christ’s love is for all people, for all people are children of God and created by God.

Matthew 9:36-37 is Jesus’ declaration that the “harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” The Lord of the harvest is sending out the laborers, calling us into the work of God to share God’s love and declare that the reign of God is at hand.

Christ is Risen! We are still looking for signs of the resurrection all around us, but perhaps we are called to look within us. We have become the body of Christ as the church—we are the resurrection. We are witnesses of God’s love and grace in our lives and the ones who share that love with the world. We are the ones called to open the scriptures and share the story of God’s love. We are the ones who are called to be Christ’s body in this world.

Call to Worship

Who will tell the Good News to the world?

 **Here I am, send me!**

Who will share God’s love with those on the margins?

 **Here we are, we will go!**

Who will care for the poor and the sick?

 **Here we are, we will do it!**

Who will visit the imprisoned, who will speak out for the oppressed?

 **Here we are, and though we tremble, we will follow Christ.**

 **Let us join in this time of worship, ready to be the body of Christ. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God, You are One, but we are fragmented. We confess that we do not work together as Your body; we insist on our own way. We put our wants above others’ needs, and often our perceived needs are not necessities. We justify ourselves at the cost of others’ well-being. Forgive us for our selfish ways, for not seeing others as our brothers and sisters. Forgive us for not seeing ourselves as part of a larger body in You. Restore us, bind us together, so we might know that we need each other in all our diversity to be Your body. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Here O people: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. We are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are the body of Christ. You cannot be forgotten, you cannot be left out. You are forgiven, you are loved, and you are restored. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Prayer

Risen Christ, we come to You seeking signs of the resurrection, signs of new life. Help us to be witnesses of Your eternal love in our lives by loving our neighbors as ourselves, by seeking their needs and including the marginalized and oppressed. Remind us that we draw borders and boundaries, but You have come to tear them down. Call us into Your body and remind us of all the unique gifts that we bring when we join together in You, the living God, who lives and breathes and moves in us. Amen.