Worship Resources for April 23, 2017—Second Sunday of Easter

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

Narrative Lectionary: Emmaus Road, Luke 24:13-35 (Psalm 30 or vs. 11)

Peter is speaking to the crowds that have gathered on the day of Pentecost, who have heard Peter and the other disciples speaking in the languages of those around them. Peter began this discourse speaking about the work of the Holy Spirit, and here, Peter addresses the people as his fellow Israelites and speaks of Jesus as descended of David. Peter argues that David was speaking about the Messiah in Psalm 16, and that Jesus is this Messiah, who God raised up.

Psalm 16 is a plea for protection from God. Attributed historically to David, the psalmist sings of their faithfulness to God rather than to other gods, because in God is whom they find refuge. God does not abandon the faithful to death, and in God one finds rest and salvation.

1 Peter 1:3-9 is a blessing for the reader/listener of the new hope found in Jesus Christ, in his resurrection from the dead. The writer speaks of keeping faithfulness to Christ even when they have not seen Jesus. They know the love of Jesus and they love Jesus, and even in the time of trial, the genuineness of their faith is made known.

John 20:19-31 is the story of Jesus’ appearance to the disciples. After appearing to Mary Magdalene, he appears to the disciples in the house they were staying at, saying, “peace be with you.” He appears even though the doors were locked and the disciples were hiding in fear. Jesus breathes on them, telling them to receive the Holy Spirit. However, Thomas is not with them, and refuses to believe until he sees Jesus’ scars. When Jesus appears again a week later with Thomas present, Thomas believes. Most scholars believe this was the original ending of John’s Gospel, a story to teach about believing without seeing, about having faith even amidst doubt.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the appearance of Jesus to two previously unknown disciples on the road to Emmaus, one of whom is named Cleopas. They encounter a stranger on the road to Emmaus. They do not understand what has happened, and have dismissed the women disciples of Jesus who have claimed to have found the tomb empty and have seen angels. Jesus declares to the two disciples on the road that they are foolish, and explains the Scriptures to them, from the time of Moses and the prophets, about the Messiah, but they still do not understand until they persuade him to stay with them and he breaks bread with them. In the breaking of the bread, they recognize him, and he vanishes from their sight.

Psalm 30 is a song of praise to God who has healed. The psalmist was near death and has recovered from illness, saved from death. Anger and sorrow pass, but forgiveness and joy are forever. Mourning is turned to dancing, and the psalmist gives thanks for God’s deliverance.

Remaining faithful after two thousand years is no easy feat. All of us at times have doubts and struggles, times of uncertainty and restlessness. Sometimes our struggles seem unsurmountable and we feel like Thomas—unless we see Jesus right in front of us, we aren’t going to believe. There is too much hate, too much evil, too much harm in this world. But God has a way of working among the people around us, lifting us up, encouraging us—and when we find a scrap of goodness in this world and cling to it, we find our faith will grow. When we act in love and faithfulness to God, our faith grows, and we encourage others.

Call to Worship (from 1 Peter 1:8, 3)

Although we have not seen Christ,

 **We love Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Even though we do not see Christ now,

 **We believe in Jesus and rejoice with an indescribable joy.**

We have been given a new birth into a living hope,

 **Through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead.**

Come, worship the living Christ,

 **Whom we haven’t seen, but we have come to believe. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Faithful One, we confess we have not remained faithful. We have lived as if the things of this world mattered: our possessions and promotions, our notoriety and accomplishments. We have not lived by becoming last of all and servant of all, as You did for us. We have not remained faithful to Your teaching, but have pursued worldly pleasures and satisfaction. Forgive us. Call us into Your ways to live for others. Call us into Your ways of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Call us into Your ways of seeking the well-being of others above our own wants and desires. Call us into Your ways. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance (from Psalm 30)

Sing praises to God, give thanks to God’s holy name, for weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning. God turns our mourning into dancing and calls us into rejoicing. We are forgiven of our sins, and called to go forth and share the love of God with others. Go, knowing that you are forgiven, loved, and restored. Amen.

Prayer

Loving One, enfold us in Your embrace with the violence of the world shakes us to our core. Slow our heartrate and calm our breathing when the despair is too great, the hate too much. Remind us that You are with us every breath of the way. Help us to meditate on the words of Scripture that bring us hope and healing. Help us to open our minds to new ways of thinking, and our hearts to embrace those who are hurting and in need of aid. Loving One, breathe into us Your love, and overflow our hearts to love the world. Amen.