Worship Resources for May 1st, 2016—Sixth Sunday of Easter

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 16:9-15; Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5; John 14:23-29 or John 5:1-9

Narrative Lectionary: Faith, Hope, and Love, 1 Corinthians 13 (Mark 12:28-31)

Paul has a vision of a man in Macedonia pleading for help, so Paul leads his group there to the town of Philippi, where they discover that women from the area are praying down by the river. This group of women were most likely Greeks, who were God-fearers (believing in one God over the pantheon). Lydia, a wealthy woman who was with the others there, has her whole household baptized after listening to Paul and the others, and invites them to stay with her. While the vision was of a man calling for help, they found Lydia, and she becomes a prominent figure in the early church.

Psalm 67 is a communal prayer of praise and blessing, calling upon the people to praise God, who is the judge of all nations, and God is the one who blesses all people.

Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5 is John’s final vision, the new Jerusalem, where there is no temple because God dwells with the people and the people are at home with God. There is no darkness, no death, nothing evil there, and there is no want of anything, because God is the one the people desire, and God fulfills all desires.

Jesus is preparing the disciples in John 14:23-29 for when he is no longer with them. Jesus tells them that those who love him will keep his teachings, and that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will continue to teach them. Jesus reminds the disciples that if they love him, they will remain faithful and know that Jesus is returning to God, and that one day, the home of God will be among the people.

John 5:1-9 is a story of Jesus healing in Jerusalem at a pool on the Sabbath. Many had come to experience healing there, including a man who was ill for thirty-eight years and complained to Jesus that every time he started to go down into the pool when the water was stirred up, someone went in front of him. Jesus commands him to stand up, take his mat and walk, and he does so, despite it being the Sabbath—all because Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be made well?”

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the most famous passage from 1 Corinthians, the poem on love that was most likely a hymn or poem known in the early church, though it is possible that Paul composed it. This passage reminds the listener that it doesn’t matter how right we think, or even know, that we are, if we don’t have love for one another, the love that comes from God, we have nothing. Paul called for the church in Corinth to remember the more important things, to seek spiritual gifts, and the greatest gift is love.

Mark 12:28-31 contains Jesus’ response to the question of the greatest commandment: to love God with our whole being, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus declares there is no other commandment greater than these.

God’s desire for us to be at home with God. In John’s Revelation, we are told that God will make a home among the people. God’s love for us is made known in Christ Jesus, who teaches us that when we follow his teachings, when we love one another, we are faithful, and we will find our home with God. Love is greater than any gift; love is greater than any conflict. Love is what calls us to open our hearts and welcome others, and to be the church. The vision hold in common is one in which we are at home with God, dwelling in God’s love.

Call to Worship

Those who love Jesus keep his words;

**Those who love Christ will make their home with God.**

Those who know Jesus will know his peace;

**Those who know Jesus will be taught in the ways of peace.**

Come, follow and love Jesus our Lord, who has come to be among us.

**Come, worship God, who lives among us, loves us, and calls us home. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Loving One, we confess we have not lived as You taught us. We have not followed Your commandment to love You because we have not loved one another. We have sought the ways of the world over Your ways. We have not welcomed others in the way You have welcomed us. Forgive us. Call us back to following Your voice, which calls us to love one another. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

The steadfast love of God never ceases. No matter where you have gone, where you have strayed, God is still calling your name and calling to you, “Come home.” Come, and know God’s love, and know that Christ is making his home with you now, when you turn to God’s love. Amen.

Prayer

Creator of the Universe, You are far-seeing, far-reaching, far-beyond our wildest imagination. Call us into Your vision, to seek what You desire for us, which is to be one with You. In the love of Christ, may we love one another. In the wisdom of the Spirit, may we serve one another. In Your vision, O God, may we dwell with one another in Your peace. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.