Worship Resources for May 10th, 2015—Sixth Sunday of Easter, Mother’s Day

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 10:44-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

Narrative Lectionary: God’s Love Poured Out, Romans 5:1-11 (Matthew 11:28-30)

I have included some resources for Mother’s Day below. It is always good to remember that Mother’s Day is not a celebratory day for many, and it is not a liturgical holiday. There are those who wish to become mothers who cannot; those who have lost children; those who are missing their mother’s; those who have had difficult or nonexistent relationships with their mothers. However, the origins of Mother’s Day in the United States were in the peace and antiwar movements begun by Julia Ward Howe for mothers of deceased soldiers after the Civil War. This was later picked up by Anna Jarvis and became a day to celebrate and honor mothers, but the holiday’s roots were in remembering grieving mothers.

We begin the Revised Common Lectionary readings with Acts 10:44-48, a short passage right after Peter has received a revelation that the Good News is for all people. The Holy Spirit has come upon those who have gathered near, including the Gentiles, and Peter declares that they should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The barrier between Jew and Gentile has been torn in the early church. Soon after this passage, in chapter 11, the early followers will become known as “Christians.”

Psalm 98 sings of a victorious God who is also the God of creation. The people of Israel have experienced God’s love and faithfulness in their own victory, but they give the glory to God. The psalmist calls upon the congregation to sing praises to God, who will come to judge the earth—the very earth whose hills sing to God—as well as all the peoples.

1 John 5:1-6 speaks of the victory of God in God’s love. To love God means to obey his commandments, and they are summed up in loving one’s neighbor as one’s self. Faith is the victory that conquers the world, and that faith is expressed in our love for God and for one another, and God expresses that love through the giving of Jesus Christ, God’s Only Son. The Spirit of God testifies to this in each of us, by how we act out God’s love to one another.

John 15:9-17 is the summary of the commandments in Jesus: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (vs 12). There is no greater love than the love Jesus had for us, a love in which he laid down his life for us. Jesus chose us, and loves us, and we are called to love one another. There is no greater love than his. We are no longer called servants but friends. The commandments are given so that we might love one another. All of our faith is about loving God, and loving one another.

The Narrative Lectionary continues in Romans 5:1-11. Through Christ, we have grace and forgiveness, though we do not deserve it. God showed us how much God loved us by Christ being willing to die for us, though we were sinners. We suffer in this life, but God’s love will see us through this suffering (note: Paul does not say that God causes suffering, but to know that God will be with us in it and we can find hope in God during our time of suffering). In Christ, there is reconciliation, there is hope, and there is healing, because there is nothing we can do to deserve it—it is a free gift from God.

Matthew 11:28-30 contains a saying from Jesus to give our burdens over to him. In Christ, we will find refuge and rest. There is much suffering in the world, much that we have to carry, but in Christ, we know that we are not alone, and we can give our burdens over to Jesus, and find rest in our souls.

The Christian Life is not easy, because life is not easy. Jesus’ life, death and resurrection does not necessarily make our lives any easier—in fact, reading the tales of the early Christians, they often experienced more persecution and suffering. Perhaps we feel it should be easier, and we should know that God is with us always, but at times we don’t feel like Christ is near. The Good News is that, whether we feel it or not, whether we fully believe it or not, Christ is with us. We are not alone. And the fear of death no longer has a hold on us, because there is new life in Christ now, and eternal life begins now.

Mother’s Day Litany

Holy God, on this day we honor You, as we do every day.

 **Today we honor You, our Mothering God, who cares for us and nurtures us.**

May we comfort those who mourn their mothers on this day;

 **May we offer our support to those whose mothers are not present.**

Guide us in our love for one another,

 **That we may be empathetic and caring for those dealing with fertility issues.**

Hold us in Your love,

**And may we seek justice for those who have been abused and harmed by those who were supposed to protect them.**

Loving God who cares and protects us all,

 **We give you thanks and praise for those who have been like mothers to us,**

 **For those who have mothered us in the light of Your love,**

 **For all who reflect Your image of love, care, compassion and peace.**

On this Mother’s Day,

**May we give thanks for mothers in the world that do Your work of justice, that love us as You have first loved us, and that challenge us to live in righteousness and peace.**

***For Christ has said “Whoever does the will of God is my mother and my sister, my brother and my friend.” May it be so. Amen.***

Call to Worship

If Christ is for us,

 **Who can be against us?**

If love is with us,

 **Then what do we fear?**

If grace is with us,

 **Then what are we ashamed of?**

If peace is with us,

 **We know God’s presence is very near.**

Come, let us worship our God.

 **Come, may we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,**

 **May we not be afraid to follow Christ’s ways. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Loving Christ, we confess that we have not followed your ways. We have failed to love our neighbor as ourselves, and in doing so, we have failed to love You. We have failed to trust in Your ways, and have sought our own path that leads to selfishness and greed. Forgive us. Turn us away from the ways of the world, and lead us back to You, by loving our neighbors and caring for their needs first. In the name of the one who laid His life down for us, Your most holy and precious name, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Because Christ first loved us, we are always loved, no matter what. We are God’s beloved children, even when we stray, even when we fall short—God loves us dearly. Go forth knowing you are forgiven, you are given another chance to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Amen and amen.

Prayer

Compassionate God, You have shown us great love and mercy even though we do not remember Your ways. Guide us to walk in the ways of You love and kindness, compassion and justice, so that we can love You most fully in the love we have for our neighbors. May we reach beyond the borders we have drawn, beyond the walls we have constructed, far beyond the trenches we have dug, to truly love our kindred around the world as You have first loved us as Your children. In the name of Jesus Christ, our companion now into eternity, we pray. Amen.