Worship Resources for May 10th, 2020—Fifth Sunday of Easter, Mother’s Day (U.S.)

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

Narrative Lectionary: Church at Corinth, Acts 18:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (Mark 9:34-35)

Stephen is considered one of the first martyrs after Christ. He refused to stop proclaiming the name of Jesus and boldly declared his vision of Christ in heaven seated at the right hand of God in Acts 7:55-60. Even as he was dying, he stayed true to the faith, and asked God to forgive them, as Christ asked God to forgive those who crucified him.

The psalmist calls upon God for deliverance in Psalm 31. Quoted by Christ and by Stephen, the psalmist commits their spirit to God, knowing that God has saved them from death. The psalmist closes by knowing that their hope and future is in God’s hands, and they pray for God to deliver them from their enemies.

The writer of 1 Peter called upon the readers to grow into their faith in 1 Peter 2:2-10. Referring to Psalm 3:8 (“taste and see that the Lord is good”), the writer instructed the people to draw closer to God, to becoming living stones, built into spiritual dwelling places for God. In following Christ, they were rejected by the world. Christ was rejected, but quoting Psalm 118, the stone rejected became the chief cornerstone. Those who were Gentiles were not included before, but now the Gentile believers could call themselves God’s people because of Christ.

In Jesus’ farewell discourse in John’s gospel, Jesus assured the disciples that there is room for them in the reign of God in John 14:1-14. In the previous verses, Jesus told the disciples that they would not be able to follow him where he was going that night—arrested and crucified. Peter declared he would lay down his life for Jesus, but Jesus knew he would deny him. However, Jesus assured them that he was going ahead of them, to prepare the way to the place where they were going—and they would know the way. But Thomas asked, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus responded, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus spoke directly to his disciples in that moment, who were confused and uncertain. Right after Jesus responded to Thomas that if they know him, they know the Father also, Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Their fears were starting to get the better of them. Jesus questioned Philip back, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?” Jesus continued his response to Philip that he and the Father are one, that those who believe in him will do even greater works, and Jesus will do anything that the disciples ask of him, to glorify God who dwells in him.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the church in Corinth. In Luke’s account in Acts 18:1-4, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, Jewish exiles from Rome, and he stayed with them. The three of them, by trade, were tentmakers. While Paul stayed with them, he would argue in the synagogue, testifying before Jews and Greeks.

In Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth, he addresses the conflict that he has heard about in 1 Corinthians 10:1-18. The church has fractured, with some claiming to follow Paul, others claiming to follow Apollos, others Peter, and still others Christ. Paul stated that Christ sent him to proclaim the gospel, the message of the cross of Christ. Paul urged the church that there be no divisions among them. No one was baptized in the name of Paul, but all belong to Christ, and that is the gospel he preaches.

In Mark 9:34-35, Jesus overheard the disciples arguing among themselves about who was the greatest. Jesus declared that whoever wanted to be first must be last of all and servant of all.

How can we follow Jesus when many of us are staying at home, and limited on where we can go? How can we do what Christ has called us to do? More than ever, our world, our country, our community, our neighbors need love. How can we share God’s love? Wearing and making masks, washing our hands, sending cards and picking up the phone—these are all acts of love. Donating food to food pantries, donating funds to shelters, or giving blood—these are all acts of love. Forgiving debts is an act of love. Christ told us that we would not only do the works he did, but even greater works—perhaps our work of love can help transform the world.

Call to Worship (John 13:34-35)

**Jesus said,**

**“I give you a new commandment,**

**that you love one another.**

**Just as I have loved you,**

**you also should love one another.**

**By this everyone will know you are my disciples,**

**if you have love for one another.”**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Loving God, we confess that at times we don’t know the way. We have become lost in fear, scattered in hopelessness. We have forgotten how to listen for Your voice. We demand signs that this will end, answers to how to move forward, because uncertainty is too heavy a burden. And yet, You have shown us the way, the truth, and the life, through Your son Jesus. You have shown us the way of love. You have shown us that our acts of love are powerful, able to overcome fear and hopelessness. Remind us of who You have called us to be, and what You have called us to do: love one another. In the name of Christ, who has shown us the way, we pray all things. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

We know that the way, the truth, and the life is love, and that love has been made known to us in Christ Jesus. We are forgiven, loved, and restored. In Christ we find rest, we find hope, and we are not alone. We belong to Christ, and to one another. Live into Christ’s ways of love and peace, and God will see you through. Amen.

Prayer

God Who Sees, long ago Hagar was in the wilderness, alone and afraid, and You took notice of her. She called You God Who Sees, and we know now in our loneliness, in our fear, You see us. You know what we are feeling—our frustration, our anger, our dejection, our exhaustion. You know what we are going through, and You are with us. God Who Sees, help us to envision beyond where we are now, and to draw closer to You. Help us to know one another more fully by caring for each other’s needs. God Who Sees, help us to see those that we might have forgotten, those that we are missing—the people who sleep outside, the families who struggle to put food on the table, the seniors who are lonely. Help us to remember we are called by You to love one another. God Who Sees, help us to see with our hearts, to love all of Your children. Amen.

A Prayer for Mother’s Day

The prophet Isaiah said, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.”

Mothering God, we cherish Your great love for us. As the Creator, You made us in Your image, and called life from the earth and water. In baptism, we are born anew, from water and Spirit, and Your love and care are made known to us as we grow in faith.

We give You thanks for those who have been mothers and stepmothers in our lives, for grandmothers and aunts and all those who have been like mothers to us, who have shown us Your comfort and courage, peace and strength.

God of Peace, we acknowledge that this day that was originally created for mothers grieving the loss of their children in war. We grieve with all who have lost a child, who have struggled with fertility issues, who have had to give up children in foster care and adoption. May Your love surround us, hold us in these tender times.

Loving God, we hold tenderly the ones who have difficult relationships with their mothers, for those who have separated in relationship. We weep with those who are missing their mothers.

In these difficult times, O God, we know the distance that separates us, the physical distance for safety, the distance of time for those gone, the distance of fading memories. We know the distance of estrangement. We pray for healing wherever possible, O God, for forgiveness wherever possible, and for the hope that You bring in our lives.

Hold us, Loving Parent, in Your healing hands, on this day. Amen.