Worship Resources for May 20th, 2018—Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:1-21 or Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:22-27 or Acts 2:1-21; John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Narrative Lectionary: Pentecost; Rejoice in the Lord, Acts 2:1-21; Philippians 4:4-7 (John 14:16-17)

Acts chapter two tells us of the Day of Pentecost, and how the disciples experienced the Holy Spirit coming upon them. They had gathered in Jerusalem with other Jews for the spring harvest festival, the first fruits of the earth, when they had this transformative experience with the Holy Spirit. Suddenly they were able to speak to Jews from all over the world (the Mediterranean) outside of Judea in their languages. However, some of those who attended questioned what happened, claiming the disciples must be drunk. But Peter addressed the skeptics, who are all from Jerusalem and Judea, and boldly declared that this is the work of God as spoken through the prophet Joel. God is declaring good news for all nations, for all people.

The prophet Ezekiel is commanded by God to prophesy to a valley of dry bones, to a graveyard as the people faced exile. God uses the image of this valley of bones becoming living bodies again as the image of what will happen when Israel returns from exile. There will be life and hope again. The work of the Spirit brings forth life, and God’s spirit will reside in the people.

The psalmist declares that God is the one who in wisdom made all of creation in Psalm 104:24-34, 35b. God is the one who gives life, and when God’s spirit moves, God renews all of creation. The psalmist praises God through song and prayer for all of God’s work in creation.

Paul describes creation, as well as the believers in Christ, being in labor pains in Romans 8:22-27, waiting for the fulness of redemption. Even those who have the gifts of the Spirit are still waiting, and the Spirit helps the faithful to keep their hope alive in God. The Spirit intercedes on behalf of the faithful, because God knows our hearts, our failings and shortcomings, but the Spirit helps us to wait with patience.

Jesus speaks in the Gospel according to John, 15:16-27, and 16:4b-15, of the Holy Spirit as the Advocate. The Advocate testifies on behalf of God, and Jesus declares to the disciples once he is gone, the Advocate will be present with them. The Advocate—the Spirit—will guide all to the truth, revealing what is sin, what is righteousness, and what is judgment—for the ruler of the world is condemned. The Spirit will declare what is to come.

The Narrative Lectionary also shares Acts 2:1-21, but in addition, adds Philippians 4:4-7. Paul calls upon the church in Philippi, which has faced internal conflict as well as external missionaries bringing a false gospel, to rejoice in the Lord and to know the peace of God, to give thanks and let their requests be made known to God.

In John 14:16-17, Jesus promises that God is sending another Advocate—the Holy Spirit—who will be with them forever. Jesus has told them that he is going to leave them, but promises that the Advocate will never leave them. They know the Advocate because the Spirit is already there. God is already at work among them. The sending of the Advocate is really the revealing of God in a new way, in a new understanding of God’s Spirit at work.

The Spirit has been present since the beginning. A wind from God swept over the waters of creation, and wind, breath, and spirit are all the same word in Hebrew (*ruach*) and in Greek (*pneuma*). However, Jesus promised the disciples that a new Advocate would come, that the Spirit would come in a new way, and on the Day of Pentecost, the work of the Spirit was revealed to the disciples. But this same Spirit has always been at work, just as the message of God’s love has been present and known since the beginning but revealed to us in a new way through Jesus Christ. God is doing something new, and even Paul declares that now we have the Spirit, but we are still in the labor pains. God is still doing something new.

Call to Worship (from Psalm 104:31, 33-35)

May the glory of the Lord endure forever!

 **May the Lord rejoice in all the work of creation!**

We will sing to God as long as we live,

 **We will sing praise to God while we have being.**

May our meditation be pleasing to God,

 **For we rejoice in the Lord.**

Bless the Lord, O my soul;

 **May we enter this time of worship,**

**knowing God’s Spirit is at work in us.**

**Praise the Lord!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy God, we confess to You that we have not paid attention. We have failed to see signs of You at work around us in creation. We have failed to notice You at work in our neighbors, those who are different from us, those who are marginalized, those who are often forgotten. We have failed to recognize that You are at work inside of us, and we have resisted opening our hearts and changing our minds. Forgive us for our selfish ways. Forgive us for putting ourselves first, instead of humbling ourselves to You, humbling ourselves to the myriad of ways the Spirit is at work in us, around us, and among us. Call us back to Your ways. Help us to be open to experiencing You through the love and care of our neighbors, through the beauty and wonder and awe-inspiring power of nature, and most of all, to be open to new insights, understandings, and new ways of love. In the name of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit, and our Wondrous Creator, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

The Spirit is always doing something new. She is always at work, and she needs a hand. Put away selfishness, put away sheepishness, put away your excuses. Roll up your sleeves. Do the hard work of forgiveness. Do the hard work of repentance. Do the hard work of love and mercy. And know that God still loves you. Like a grandma with sweets in her pocket, God’s love will still surprise you, but you know that already. Go, and share the Good News. Amen.

Prayer

Triune God, You are still a Mystery to us that we attempt to comprehend. We have known You in different ways, and we have named You many names. We know that You dwell within us and yet are beyond comprehension. What we do know is this: You love us, and made us to love You. You created us to be in relationship, and You are in relationship. We cannot know You without loving one another, and You are love. Triune God, may Your Mystery continue to challenge us and guide us as we seek You. Creator, Christ, and Spirit, of many names and ways of being, we pray. Amen.