Worship Resources for May 21, 2017—Sixth Sunday of Easter

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

Narrative Lectionary: Living by Faith, Galatians 1:13-17, 2:11-21 (Luke 18:9-14)

Paul speaks in front of the Greeks gathered in at the Areopagus. A popular place for street philosophers to share their wisdom to the crowds, Paul uses the moment to speak about Jesus. Paul claims that the unknown God that they have an altar to is in fact the same God that Paul knows through Jesus Christ. The unknown God is in fact the one God who made the world, and from one ancestor made all people. Paul uses not only their place, but their own poets, to reach the people and declare that all the people, Greek or Jew, are children of God. Paul also declares that there will come a day of judgment, and the time has come for repentance for all of God’s children by the one who God raised from the dead.

The psalmist sings of the trials the people have been through, and how God has been faithful in Psalm 66:8-20. The psalmist declares that they will enter the temple with burnt offerings for God, thanksgiving for God’s deliverance. God is the one who has listened to the pleas of the psalmist and the psalmist calls upon all to gather and hear the good news of what God has done.

We continue to read the letter of 1 Peter in 3:13-22. The writer instructs the readers to do the right thing and to speak for the faith—knowing that others will not want to hear and that they may suffer and be persecuted for it, for it is better to suffer doing good than evil. The writer uses baptism as a symbol of appealing to God for a good conscience, and a symbol of rising with Christ. Christ’s proclamation of faith was made in his death and resurrection, in his own suffering. Our proclamation is made in our baptism, but also in our life, living the life of faith, even when we suffer.

John 14:15-21 continues Jesus’ discourse to the disciples before his betrayal. Jesus reminds the disciples that he will not leave them orphaned, and that he is coming to them in a new way, but they are called to keep the commandments and love one another. The Advocate, the Spirit, is coming, and will be with them forever. The Spirit abides with them and with God, and Jesus abides with them and with God the Creator.

Last week, the Narrative Lectionary focused on the Council in Jerusalem from the view written in Acts. This week, we get Paul’s account in Galatians. Paul also explains his conversion experience differently than how Luke does in Acts. And unlike Acts, which treats Peter as being on Paul’s side, in Paul’s view Peter has shied away from the good news of the Gospel by retreating from eating with the Gentile believers. Paul calls him out on his hypocrisy, along with all those who keep to the old traditions because those ways have died with Christ.

Luke 18:9-14 contains the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, in which two men went to pray, but one spoke aloud of their disdain for others, including the tax collector, and claimed to be so faithful and giving. The tax collector, however, simply beat his breast and asked for mercy from God. Jesus declares that the one asking for mercy went home justified.

The God we know has given us the commandments, summed up under the greatest commandment to love God and to love one another. Christ has taught us how to love one another, but we continue to fall into the patterns of separating people out, of believing somehow we are better than others, or that we have suffered more than others, or that we are justified more than others. Instead, we are reminded that we are called to love one another, and that Christ abides with us, and the Spirit has come to be with us, and this is what we are called to do: to keep the commandments and love one another, for this is the way we know; this is the God we know.

Call to Worship:

Come, gather, and listen to the Good News of God’s love!

 **Come, share, and tell the story of Jesus!**

Come, worship, lift up your voices to praise our Creator!

 **Come, sing, make a joyful noise unto the Lord!**

Come, pray, breathe in the Spirit of Life!

 **Come, worship our God, who breathes us into life!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Spirit of Life, we confess that we have been too busy for You. We have to-do lists and chores and tasks that need completing. We have ordered our priorities so that busy-ness is rewarded instead of slowing down and spending time with others and with You. Forgive us for falling into the ways of the world, and draw us into Your rhythm of life. Help us to slow down, to meditate and contemplate, to pray and to listen, to what You have for us to learn and understand. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

The Spirit of Life lives within us, calls to us, reaches out to bring us back to the ways of God. Listen, contemplate, and learn by following the Rhythm of Life—to love one’s neighbor as one’s self, to serve one another, and to serve God. Go, knowing you are forgiven and loved, and listen to for the rhythm of God, to follow the way of love. Amen.

Prayer

Shaper of Things to Come, mold our hearts to be more like Yours. Shape our desires to live out Your created intention for our lives and not what the world wants for us. Craft our passion to fulfill Your commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves,s so that our very lives would reflect Your love for us and for all. Create in us a new spirit that responds to Your love and light, and reflects it into this world, so that we all may participate in the New Creation. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.