Worship Resources for May 24, 2015—Pentecost (Memorial Day Sunday in US)

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: Nothing Can Separate Us, Acts 2:1-4 and Romans 8:18-39 (Matthew 28:16-20)

On this day of Pentecost, we begin with the passage from Acts, in which the disciples gathered in a house in Jerusalem and experience the Holy Spirit coming upon them, in a way that they can only explain like the sound of a rushing wind, and in images such as divided tongues like fire resting on their heads. And suddenly they are able to speak the languages of the peoples who have journeyed to Jerusalem on pilgrimage from all over their known world. The awe and wonder of what is happening is lost on some who think the disciples from Galilee have just enjoyed too much wine that morning, but Peter declares this is the work of the Spirit poured upon the people, as declared by the prophets. In the New Testament, it seems that whenever something happens that is out of the ordinary, even “unnatural” but is good, there are skeptics and excusers. But Jesus and later his disciples declare that this is the work of God. Peter boldly declares here that what has happened is a good thing, is the result of the Holy Spirit, and is rooted in Scripture, in what God has done before.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 is the famous but bizarre passage of where the prophet Ezekiel is told by God to prophesy to dry bones, symbolic of the life that the spirit of God will bring to the people who have no hope. If death is the end, the God says there is no end. God will open up the graves and bring back life. God will do what has not been done before. God will bring hope where there is no hope. Breath, Spirit and Wind are the same word in Hebrew: *ruach* (it is also the same in Greek: *pneuma*). There is hope in the breath, because in the breath there is the Spirit of God.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b is part of a great song of creation praising God the Creator. God is the one who takes away the Breath, ending life, and sends forth the Spirit that creates life. The psalmist promises to sing praises to God “while I have being.” In other words, as long as breath is in the singer, they will sing of God’s wondrous work. And it is the Spirit of God that will bring forth life again.

In Romans 8:22-27, Paul speaks of having hope in what is not seen. That what we have seen in all of creation has been “groaning in labor pains until now.” What we have seen is not the fullness of what God is doing—the fullness of what God is doing lies in hope. We don’t even know what we are hoping for, what we long for, what we pray for—but the Spirit does, and the Spirit intercedes. The Spirit is helping to bring forth new life, as it has since Genesis 1:2.

John 15:16-17, 16:4b-15 contains the account in John of Jesus’ foretelling of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the works of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will guide the disciples in truth after Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Spirit will “prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment,” as John’s Gospel account tells us that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Spirit will lead us away from the culture that has the commandments as a checklist of rules into the culture of God (or kingdom of God), which is to be our way of life.

The Narrative Lectionary uses parts of the same passages as the Revised Common Lectionary, beginning with Acts 2:1-4 and continuing with the passage from Romans, but extends the Romans passage to the end of chapter eight, which is Paul’s declaration of faith that there is nothing in all of creation, nothing at all, that will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Narrative Lectionary also includes the Great Commission passage from Matthew, in which Jesus tells the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus also promises that he will be with them always, until the end of the age.

A wind from God swept over the waters of the deep in Genesis 1:2, and that same wind, that Spirit, has been bringing forth light and life in all of creation, and all of creation has been groaning in labor pains. God is doing something new, because God is always doing something new and bringing forth new life. In Christ, we know that death no longer is an ending, Death no longer has a hold on us, and the Spirit is doing something new, in life and death, through the resurrection of Christ. Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Call to Worship (from Romans 8:22, 23, 25; Isaiah 43:19; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

All of creation has been groaning in labor pains, until now.

 **God is about to do a new thing!**

We hope for what we do not see; we wait for it with patience.

 **God will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert**

Not only is creation waiting, but we ourselves are waiting,

 **For everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!**

The Spirit is among us now, doing something new;

 **Come, Worship God, who is beginning something new in us.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we have put You in a box. We have decided who You are, what You do, and what You will or will not do. We have put Love in a box, deciding who is worthy and who is not. Break open the box. Tear down the walls and blow open the lid. May the Spirit move in us to new understandings and insights. May the Spirit move in us to love one another as You have loved us, in limitless ways. In the name of Christ, whose love never ends, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

The Spirit is among us now, creating in us, and showing us God’s love in new ways. Be open to God’s love to transform you, knowing that you are loved and forgiven. Be transformed, be forgiven, be loved, for the Spirit is already at work in us. Amen.

Prayer

Creator of the heavens and earth, You have breathed in us Your Spirit, and Your Spirit is Life. You have breathed in us Your Spirit, and Your Spirit calls us to justice. You have breathed in us Your Spirit, and Your Spirit gathers us in love. You have breathed in us Your Spirit, and Your Spirit has shown us compassion. May we live as Spirit-filled people, living our lives to seek justice, gather with others in love, and be filled with Your compassion so that we can help bring life to the world. In the name of Christ, our companion in this life, a life that extends into eternity, we pray. Amen.