Worship Resources for May 25th, 2014—Sixth Sunday of Easter

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

The account in Acts of Paul’s speech at the Areopagus is incredible. Paul speaks in the way of the philosophers around them to the religious of the city, but argues against their devotion to an unknown God by declaring the known God through all of creation. This God does not require anything from us as the gods of the Greek pantheon do—there is no sacrifice or act of devotion required. What is required is not for God, but for us—repentance—so that we might come before the one who will judge the world in righteousness—Jesus.

Psalm 66:8-20 praises God for listening to the psalmist, hearing their cries, delivering the people into safety. The psalmist sings of thanksgiving, of devotion to God through offerings, and of God’s faithfulness to those who pray. The psalmist says to “come and hear,” and they will sing of God’s faithfulness and endurance.

1 Peter 3:13-22 continues on the theme of God using suffering for good, though suffering is not sent by God. The writer uses the story of Noah and Noah’s family trials of being aboard the ark as an example of God’s faithfulness during suffering and trial, and connects the story of Noah to baptism being an act symbolizing God’s saving grace. The writer urges the listener/reader to persevere and use their suffering as a way of witnessing to Jesus’ faithfulness.

John 14:15-21 contains Jesus’ promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, that the disciples will not be left alone once he is gone. Jesus says “You know him because he abides in you, and he will be in you” (vs. 17b), and this implies that the Holy Spirit has already come, but will be known in a new way. But the passage begins with Jesus’ command, “If you love me, then you will keep my commandments.” The Way of Christ is to keep the commandment of love, and when we love one another, we know that the Spirit is among us, dwelling within us.

A connecting theme of these passages is God’s faithfulness even in difficult times. We as Christians know God’s faithfulness because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ throughout his life, suffering, death and resurrection. We Christians know God’s faithfulness in the wholeness of Christ’s story, in which love was not defeated and endures forever. We are called to respond and act in love, and by doing this, we show not only our faithfulness to Christ but Christ’s continued faithfulness to us.

Call to Worship:

The Spirit of Truth is upon us

**God’s love endures forever.**

The world cannot receive it

**Unless we share it with one another, for we know Christ’s love.**

Christ the Son and God the Father are one,

**And so Christ is one with us**

Come, let us worship our Lord together

**May the world know God’s love, and that we are one in Christ. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we come before You with our exhaustion and burdens, our weary faces and tired feet. We come before you beat down by the world at times. Renew in us Your Spirit. Lift up in us Your steadfast love and strength. Call upon us to lean on each other, to share our burdens with each other and to help carry each other’s load. It is not an easy life; it is not an easy call to follow You, but help us to hold on to the strength found in Your love for us, that lead You to the cross and beyond into eternal life. In the name of Christ, our Rock and our Redeemer, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Know this: God loves you madly. God has breathed life into you and with that breath is hope, joy, inspiration, and courage. Live into your created intention and know that God’s love is with you always. May you find forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation. In the name of Christ, who makes all things new, we pray. Amen.

Prayer

Author of Salvation, at times the trials in our lives seem too great to overcome. The burdens that we carry on our shoulders and in our hearts wear us down. We have felt rejection, hurt, anger and despair. Lift up our hearts. Lift the burdens from us by helping us to turn to one another. Call upon us to pray for each other. Lead us to seek Your forgiveness and forgiveness by others, and help us to forgive one another to lift each other’s burdens. Help us to carry each other on this journey of life. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.