Worship Resources for May 26, 2019—Sixth Sunday of Easter

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 16:9-15; Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5; John 14:23-29 or John 5:1-9

Narrative Lectionary: God’s Love Poured Out, Romans (3:28-30) 5:1-11 (Matthew 11:28-30)

The Revised Common Lectionary continues the stories of the early followers of Jesus in Acts 16:9-15. Paul and others are journeying to Macedonia after beholding a vision of those in need, and while there, end up in Philippi. They meet Lydia, who was a God-fearer—a Greek who believed in the one God, not the pantheon. Lydia is part of a group of Greek women who gather at the river to pray, and as a dealer in purple cloth (the color of royalty), she probably was a person of wealth and influence. She eagerly listens to Paul, and then has her whole household baptized and welcomes Paul and his companions to stay with them.

Psalm 67 is a song of blessing and praise. The people have experienced the blessings of God through the yield of the earth, the fruits of the harvest. The psalmist calls upon all nations to praise God, for it is God who saves the people.

In the final vision of John of Patmos, in Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5, the vision he beholds of the New Jerusalem is one in which there is no temple, because God dwells with the people. There is no sun or moon, because God is the light of all the people. The gates are never shut, and there is no night. The tree of life, from the Garden of Eden, is planted there along the river of life, and all the people who are there belong to God. All the good things of the earth are there, and none of the hardship, pain, and sorrow.

The first selection from John’s Gospel account is part of Jesus’ final discourse in chapter 14 about the coming of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. Whoever loves Jesus will keep his words, words that are sent from God. The Advocate will teach them everything and remind the disciples of what Jesus has said to them. Jesus tells the disciples he leaves them with peace, to not let their hearts be troubled or afraid. The Holy Spirit is coming.

The second selection from John’s account is from chapter five, earlier in Jesus’ ministry when he went to Jerusalem for a festival and encountered people who were ill and disabled on the sabbath. One man had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus asks him if he wants to be made well, and the man tells Jesus that he has no one to help him into the pool, that everyone rushes ahead of him. The pool in Jerusalem near the gate was known as a place of healing and relief, where God was at work. But instead of helping him into the pool, Jesus tells him to stand up right where he is, take his mat, and walk. At once, he was made well.

The Narrative Lectionary continues in Paul’s letter to the Romans. In 3:28-30, Paul makes the argument that the God the Jewish people have believed in is the God of all people, and that faith is the basis for justification. Paul continues this argument in chapter 5 of being justified by faith. All are reconciled to God, Jew or Gentile, because Christ died for all. There is not a separate path of salvation for one group; all salvation comes through Christ, who died for all, and now has been raised.

Jesus tells the disciples in Matthew 11:28-30 that all may come to him and find rest for their souls. All may bring their burdens to Christ, who takes them on for us.

Healing is different than curing. Healing is about wholeness. Healing is about knowing the presence of God is with us; no matter what, and wherever we are. The man who begged at the pool wanted to be cured, wanted someone to take him into the pool to experience God. However, Jesus appeared in front of him and told him to take his mat and walk. He recognized that God was present with him, right there, and he was able to walk. Jesus promises the disciples that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit is coming, who will remind them of everything Jesus taught them; for God will always be present with them. Paul argues to the church in Rome that the God they have believed in as Jews is the God of all people—the tent has been drawn wider—and that Christ died for all. John of Patmos beheld a vision in which the holy city came down to earth, showing that God dwells with us, and is among us. The kingdom is coming; yet, it is as at hand, for God is with us now and always.

Call to Worship (from Matt. 4:17; John 14:23, 26-27)

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven has drawn near.”

 **God is here, with us now.**

Jesus said, “I will come and make my home with those who love me.”

 **God is here, with us now.**

Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit will come, and teach you, and remind you.”

 **God is here, with us now.**

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”

 **God is here, with us now.**

 **We join our hearts in worship, knowing God’s presence is with us always.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Peace, we confess that we often are not at peace. We are outraged at the injustice in our world. We are furious that families are separated. We cry out in agony that many are dying because of lack of affordable healthcare. We are angry that the rights of women over their own healthcare and choices are stripped away and at times criminalized. How can we be at peace, O God, when there is such oppression and violence being done to us and to others? How can we be at peace, O God, when there is so much pain? How can we be at peace, O God? Yet You are the Prince of Peace, and bring us a peace that the world does not. May we use our anger for good, O God, to bring change, and may You bring us the peace of Your presence, knowing that in Your reign, all things work for good. In Your reign, our anger will cease. Until that day, may we continue to pursue justice, may the bitterness and anger lessen. Amen.

Blessing of Assurance/Pardon (from John 14:27 and Philippians 4:7)

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” In Christ, we know that love reigns forever, that hate will not have the final word. Oppression will end. Injustice will cease. In Christ, we have our hope of new life, now and forever. May the peace that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Prayer

God of Healing and Hope, we pray for Your courage and strength to be with us. When we recognize injustice, guide us to speak out. When we see oppression, lead us to be in solidarity with the oppressed. When we hear the cries of the marginalized and the outcast, call us into accountability to amplify those voices. We know You are always present with us; therefore, may we be always present with those in need. You gave us the commandment to love one another just as You love us; may we do our part to share in Your love, healing, and hope in this world. Amen.