Worship Resources for May 29th, 2016—Second Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 18:20-39 or 1 Kings 8:22-23, 41-43; Psalm 96; Galatians 1:1-12; Luke 7:1-10

Narrative Lectionary: Forgiveness, 2 Corinthians 2:1-10

Our Revised Common Lectionary gives two options from 1 Kings. We begin with the story of the showdown of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The people have turned their hearts because of King Ahab’s following Baal and other gods, and Elijah is calling upon them to turn their hearts back to God. In a showdown on an altar, Elijah manages to call down God’s fire on an altar drenched with water three times, to show the Israelites that indeed this is their God, not Baal, and not to follow the ways of Ahab and the prophets of Baal. The people witness the fire consuming the drenched altar, and worship God.

The second option from chapter 8 also has to do with worship at the altar, but this time it is Solomon before the altar of God, in front of all of Israel. Solomon speaks of God’s faithfulness, to the point that people will come from foreign lands to worship God because they will hear of God’s deeds throughout the world. Solomon has completed the construction of the temple, which will attract people from all over the known world to see its splendor and know that the God of Israel is the God of creation.

Psalm 96 (one option for the lectionary is to read only the first six verses) calls the world into worship of God. Sing, declare, honor, and ascribe, the psalmist instructs us, as we worship God, for God’s work among the peoples, for God’s work in creation. All other gods are idols, but this God is the God who made heaven and earth.

Galatians 1:1-12 is Paul’s greetings and introduction of his letter to the church in Galatia, which has turned from the teaching that Paul had given about Jesus and have quickly turned to “another gospel.” This gospel is contrary to what Paul has taught. Paul believes that the gospel he has shared comes directly from Jesus, but the Galatians have already been led astray. As we read on in the letter, we find that the Jewish believers have separated themselves from the Gentile believers, causing division that is contrary to the good news of Jesus. This is the work of missionaries in the early century who still believed that Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the dietary restrictions.

Luke 7:1-10 is the story of a Centurion who sent for Jesus to come and heal his slave. This Centurion has some power and authority, but also the respect of the people—he has helped to build their synagogue. There were Roman citizens who sympathized with Judaism, but did not convert. This Centurion knows that it would be difficult for a Jewish man to enter his home as they would then be considered unclean, so instead he asks Jesus simply to give the word, because he knows that his slave will be healed by faith. Jesus declares that he has not found anyone in all of Israel with such faith. Through this story (written after Gentiles were already joining the church), the door is open for Gentiles to join the church fully.

The Narrative Lectionary continues in its six-week study of 2 Corinthians. Paul writes about a painful time, and the pain that has been caused on both sides—Paul has hurt someone, and someone from the church in Corinth has hurt him. The letter is disjointed—we may be missing part of the history of what happened—but Paul is calling for forgiveness, because the pain has gone beyond the two involved into the whole congregation. Paul encourages forgiveness to the one who has hurt him because the pain has been enough.

God is the God of Creation, the God of all people. God is the one who desires our worship and our faithfulness. God is the one who has opened the doors for all of us. However, we are in danger of believing that we have the corner on the truth, and we become gatekeepers. It is God that has opened wide the doors that we desire to keep locked and shut, and we ought to know better, because God has flung open the doors for us.

Call to Worship (from Psalm 96)

Sing to the Lord a new song!

**Sing to the Lord all the earth!**

Sing to the Lord and bless God’s name!

**Tell of God’s salvation every day!**

Declare God’s glory above all;

**For we still worship idols of the world and seek worldly pleasures.**

Give glory to God, all peoples of the earth!

**We give glory and honor and praise to God, who made us all and calls us together to worship.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy Spirit, we confess that we have created boundaries. We have drawn lines on the world You created without borders. We have built walls to divide land that You intended to be whole. We have worked to close doors that You have opened. Forgive us for attempting to be gatekeepers. Forgive us for creating insiders and outsiders. Forgive us for not recognizing that You are the God of All, and we are only a small part. Forgive us, call us into accountability, and help us to tear down the walls we have built and to open the doors that You purposefully left open. In the name of Christ, who is the bridge, the open door, the way in the wilderness. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

When the door has been shut in your face, the Holy Spirit blows it wide open. When the curtain has been drawn, the Spirit blows it away. When the wall has been built, the Holy Spirit crumbles it down. God is still at work in this world and in you. Take heart, move out in courage and in faith, knowing that Jesus is holding the door open for you. Amen.

Prayer

Loving Spirit, call us away from the ways of the world and into Your love. Help us to welcome others and show hospitality the way You have welcomed. Cultivate in us Your hospitality, grace, and generosity. Open us to new people, new experiences, new cultures and new ways. In the name of Christ, who welcomes all of us, we pray. Amen.