Worship Resources for May 4th, 2014—Third Sunday of Easter

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

We continue Peter’s discourse in this Easter season in Acts chapter 2, in which Peter calls upon those who have gathered near and witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, so that their sins would be forgiven and they would receive the Holy Spirit. In the Easter Season we are preparing for Pentecost. We are reminded of the time when Jesus was still among the disciples after the Resurrection, but we are also preparing for that time afterwards, which is the time we are in. We witness to others the Holy Spirit within us and that it is Jesus whom we put our faith in. Our public witness is our baptism.

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 gives thanks to God who is the one who saves us from death. The psalmist is singing of a specific time they were saved after suffering and feeling death close by. The psalmist rejoices, and makes a public offering back to God—lifting up the cup of salvation, making public vows, and a thanksgiving sacrifice—all of this is to witness to God’s act of salvation that the psalmist experienced.

1 Peter 1:17-23 speaks of having been born anew in Christ, that it is Christ who gives new life. The old life is the way of the ancestors, a way that leads to death, but new life is in Christ, which was set up before the foundations of the earth, but has come into being now. The passage appears to echo some of John’s gospel with the words of beginnings and new birth.

Luke 24:13-35 is the Journey to Emmaus, only found in Luke’s gospel account. After the resurrection, two disciples, of whom only one is named, and the name is Cleopas, not found elsewhere and not counted among the other disciples (and it should be noted that the author of Luke-Acts also called Tabitha in Acts a disciple, so there perhaps were traditions of other disciples beyond the 12), come across a stranger on their way to Emmaus. They tell the stranger what is troubling them, that the one they hoped was the Messiah had died, but some women had said that he had risen. The stranger explains to them from Moses and the prophets that this was prophesied to be (although the author of Luke never explains what those scriptures were that he was interpreting). It isn’t until the breaking of bread that the two disciples recognize Jesus, and he vanishes before their eyes. In John’s account, it is when Jesus says Mary’s name that she recognizes him; here, it is when Jesus breaks the bread that two disciples recognize him.

Going back and proof-texting through Scripture is troubling, heavy work. Something as simple as breaking bread is easy. Perhaps the message is do not get so caught up on trying to understand why, but instead, believe that it is. Christ *is* Risen. Mary was looking for a dead body, not a risen Lord. The disciples were looking for proof, not the breaking bread before them. Instead of trying to discover why and how, maybe we ought to *do*—to break bread together—to experience God among us.

Call to Worship

Where are you on the road of life?

 **Walking with God by my side.**

Where are you going? Where do you find direction?

 **Following Christ who leads me.**

Where have you come from? What brought you here?

 **The Holy Spirit has moved me forward.**

Come, let us join together on this journey of faith.

 **Let us join in worship, sojourners in faith together. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Rabbouni, as Mary called You, we confess that we are a people who want proof. We want to see it for ourselves. We want to make up our own minds. We want to know the truth by having the facts in front of us. Call us away from what can be known and into the experience. Teach us to trust our experiences of Your love around us, Your presence within us, and Your Spirit guiding us. In Your name, Jesus the Christ, who breaks bread all around us so that we might see and believe, we give thanks and pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

We are still being made new. We are still being molded and shaped. We are still experiencing life in new ways. Shed the old ways that hold you back, knowing that God has given you New Life through Christ. Eternity is now. Live into God’s love, peace, and mercy. Amen.

Prayer

Author of Salvation, we come to You seeking to start afresh but the old ways of the world have a hold on us. Help us to be loosed from their chains. Guide us into Your ways of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. You are the one who save us, redeems us, and makes us new again and again. Lead us to live a courageous life of faith in which we may help others to live in the knowledge of Your love and grace. In the name of Christ, our Risen Lord, we pray. Amen.