Worship Resources for June 10, 2018—Third Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 8:4-11, (12-15), 16-20, (11:14-15) and Psalm 138; Genesis 3:8-15 and Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35

Narrative Lectionary: Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:12-16 (Matthew 22:34-40)

Our first theme in the Hebrew Scriptures follows the call of the first kings of Israel. The prophet Samuel’s own sons were judges over Israel, but they had taken bribes. The people demanded that Samuel appoint a king, like the other nations. Samuel did not want to do this—God ought to be king. But God tells Samuel to go ahead, that the people have rejected having God as king. Samuel warns the people what having a king really means, but they still want a king. Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel.

The psalmist sings in Psalm 138, giving thanks to God before other gods. The psalmist praises God because God has answered their prayers, and all kings of the earth bow before God. The psalmist also echoes a bit of Psalm 23 in verse 7, that God is the one who protects and delivers from one’s enemies, “though I walk in the midst of trouble.” God is the one in whom we have purpose, and God will bring fulfillment to that purpose.

The second selection from the Hebrew Scriptures is from Genesis 3, when the first humans hear God walking in the garden, and they hide, for they have recently come to know that they are naked and are ashamed of it. They know they have disobeyed what God commanded of them, but the man says that the woman told him to do it, and the woman blames being tricked by the serpent. Neither take responsibility for their own actions. God declares that now there will be conflict between humanity and the serpent, and God curses the serpent.

The psalmist cries out for deliverance in Psalm 130, demanding that God hear their voice. For if there is no forgiveness, no one could come before God, but because there is, God must hear the prayers of all. God is the one who holds our last hope. God is the only one who has the power to redeem because of God’s steadfast love. God is the one whom our soul longs for.

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 speaks of the hope of resurrection that we have in God. For even our own bodies are wasting away, but God is renewing us each day. What we know and see now is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. The heavenly temple cannot be destroyed. We are to be steadfast and encouraged, and not lose heart.

Jesus’ own family tries to stop him in Mark 3:20-35. They think he is out of his mind, or has a demon, even though the crowds have come to see him. Their family and those who know Jesus cannot understand what is happening. They cannot see the goodness, the work of the Spirit. Jesus declares that those who blaspheme against him are forgiven, but not against the Spirit. If you declare the good works that the Spirit is doing as evil, then you cannot see the good God is doing. When his mother and his brothers come for him, Jesus asks, “Who are my mother and my brothers? Those who do the will of God and obey it are my mother and my sister and my brother.”

The Narrative Lectionary continues its theme on the Ten Commandments, this time focusing on commandments 4-9, which includes honoring your parents, and the quick “shall nots” of murder, adultery, stealing, and bearing false witness. These commandments are often summarized as how one lives in community (leaving the final one about coveting/wanting what others have for the final series in the Narrative lectionary). These are the basics of what is needed to live together—no murder, no stealing, no lying, honoring your parents and honoring marriage vows—whether your own or another’s marriage vows. These are not just the basis for forming a new nation, but are the basis for being good neighbors.

*(repeated from last week’s resources)* For the first four weeks after Pentecost, the second passage for the Narrative Lectionary is Jesus’ declaration of the greatest commandment: to love God with one’s whole being, and the second, which is like the first, is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus declares that on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Since only the Torah and the Prophets had been fully complied at this point as scripture, Jesus is saying this is the summary of the Bible as they know it.

The work of the Spirit is within us and around us, but often we dismiss it, or do not recognize it. The work of the Spirit is going to call us away from saving the building, or saving the church as we once knew it. The work of the Spirit is going to call us away from budgets that preserve into budgets that support mission. The work of the Spirit is divisive—not because the Spirit is divisive, but because we are. We plant our feet and hold our ground to try to stop change, to try to live the way we want to, instead of listening to what God desires for us. When we trust in the Spirit, we know the power of God, and we are part of the family of God in Christ Jesus, where we are all parents and siblings together by spirit rather than blood.

Call to Worship (from 2 Corinthians 4:15-18)

Just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture,

**So we believe, and so we speak.**

We know that the one who raised Jesus will raise us into God’s presence,

**So that we may know God’s grace and thanksgiving, to the glory of God.**

Even though our outer nature is wasting away,

**Our inner nature is renewed day by day.**

We look not at what can be seen, for it is temporary;

**What cannot be seen is eternal.**

So do not lose heart.

**Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ will come again.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Spirit of Life, we confess that we have denied Your power in our lives. We have denied Your agency. We have given up and gone with the status quo. We have felt that we are failures, that the world’s problems are too great. We have been crushed by the weight of the world on our shoulders. Ease our burdens, O God, so we may know the Spirit among us. Ease our burdens, O God, so that we might renew our strength and courage in You. Ease our burdens, O God, and help us to place our yoke upon Christ, who took on the sins of the world. May we know Christ’s peace, grace, and mercy in our lives. Spirit of Life, renew us, refresh us, and restore us. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Where can we go from God’s Spirit? Where can we flee from God’s presence? God is everywhere, beyond us, around us, and deep within us. There is no place we can go that God will not be with us. There is nothing we can do that will separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus. You are forgiven. You are loved. Know the Spirit at work in your life, and share the good news of God’s restoration. Amen.

Prayer

Wind in the Wilderness, guide us through the tangled brush and the darkened paths. May we feel You when we are lonely; may we know Your presence when we are afraid. Guide us across the great barriers, through the deep valleys, and over the mountains of difficulty. Wind in the Wilderness, may we feel You when we need strength and courage. Wind in the Wilderness, guide us safely through. Amen.