Worship Resources for June 12th, 2016

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 21:1-21a or 2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15: Psalm 5:1-8 or Psalm 32; Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7:36-8:3

Narrative Lectionary: Walk by Faith not Sight, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10

We read a terrible story of betrayal and murder in 1 Kings 21, in which King Ahab, despairing over a vineyard he wanted to own, laments to his wife Queen Jezebel, who schemes to have the vineyard owner framed and killed for blasphemy so that Ahab can possess the land. The prophet Elijah is called by God to prophecy to Ahab, to tell him that God knows what he has done and that he will face the consequences of his gruesome actions by his own gruesome death.

Another example of God calling a prophet to point out to a king that God knows their secrets and scheming is in 2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15. The prophet Nathan uses a parable to tell David that God knows what he has done, in having Uriah murdered to cover up David’s affair with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba, who has become pregnant by David. God knows what David has done, and David will have to live with the consequences of his actions. Sadly, the child of the affair dies, and Bathsheba’s husband murdered—the innocent are harmed because of David’s rash abuse of power.

Psalm 5:1-8 calls upon God to hear the words of the singer, knowing that God exposes those who tell lies, and will listen to the cries of the innocent. God does not delight in wickedness, but in justice.

Psalm 32 is a psalm of confession, a song of assurance after coming before God. Often attributed to David, the psalmist recalls that they were “wasting away” until they came before God and confessed their sin, and God forgave them. The psalmist assures those that come before God and are faithful to God will rejoice and know God’s steadfast love.

Galatians 2:15-21 is the crux of Paul’s argument to the other Jewish Christians—that even though they are Jews by birth, they are justified by their faith in Christ and not the works of the law. Christ came to erase all boundaries and to tear down all walls that divide, and if Paul or others put the walls back up, then Christ died for nothing. Christ’s death erases all walls—including the final wall of death that separates us from God.

Luke 7:36-8:3 is the story of the woman anointing Jesus. In Luke’s version, this takes place not after his entry into Jerusalem as it does in the other three gospels, but at the home of a Pharisee where Jesus is dining. The woman is unnamed in this story but is called a sinful woman (in John’s account, it is Mary of Mary and Martha, the other gospels it is an unnamed woman). The Pharisees at this dinner party are offended that Jesus would allow this kind of woman to touch him, but Jesus points out to Simon (the name of the Pharisee who invited him for dinner—a reminder that not all Pharisees were against Jesus, and that in this case some were eager to know him better) that this woman has showed him more hospitality than his host. Jesus declares that those who seek forgiveness love God, because they know God’s love and hospitality in a greater way. The passage concludes with naming the women who accompanied Jesus as well as the twelve disciples, and their prominent positions in society and how they funded the ministry of Jesus.

The Narrative Lectionary continues through 2 Corinthians with the theme Walk by Faith not Sight. What can be seen is temporary, what cannot be seen is eternal. Paul continues to speak with the church in Corinth, trying to soothe an earlier argument and the hurt that was caused. What they are going through now is a struggle, but what they can’t see—the love God has for them, the love they have for one another—is eternal. The work that they do is to please God, not themselves.

When we cover up what we have done, pretend that we haven’t gone wrong, fake our sincerity—we are not honest before God, and we deceive ourselves. Instead, when we come to God and seek forgiveness, we know God’s love and mercy. When we admit our wrongdoing and seek forgiveness, we know God’s love and grace. When we forgive others, we extend that love and grace that comes from God. Our initial reaction as human beings is to conceal, hide, and deceive—but God’s love breaks us open, causes us to recognize our wrongdoing, to seek forgiveness and healing, and to extend that love and grace to others.

Call to Worship:

Aim to please God and not others,

 **For God is the one who loves and forgives us.**

Strive to do what is good and right:

 **Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.**

Turn away from the ways of the world,

 **Turn to God, who loves you, and forgives you.**

Join your hearts in this time of worship,

 **Join together with our Creator, who loves us and redeems us.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Truth and Justice, we confess that we have deceived ourselves. We have covered up our mistakes, hidden our flaws, and concealed our shortcomings. Forgive us for not being honest. Forgive us for not telling the truth to our own hearts, and call us into honest living. May we accept ourselves for who we are, strive to do what is right, and work for justice. In the name of Christ, who loves us and tells us that our sins are forgiven. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Your sins are forgiven—Jesus said so. Go and do justice—God said so. Love one another—The Spirit said so. Forgive, do justice, and love—this is the way of God. We are not perfect, but practice makes perfect. Practice the way of Christ, so that Christ’s perfect love will be complete in you. Amen.

Prayer

Creator, Builder, Architect, Designer—You are always making something new in us, and in the world around us. Open our hearts to knowing You in a new way, to experiencing Your love in a new way, and in sharing Your love in new ways. May we be open hearted and open minded to know that You are far beyond what we can imagine, far beyond whatever walls we try to construct, for You are always beyond the bounds of our limitations. Open our hearts to have no boundaries, no walls, and no limits. In the name of Christ, who has blown the lid off of the box of life and death, we pray. Amen.