Worship Resources for June 14th, 2015—Third Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 or Ezekiel 17:22-24; Psalm 20 or Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:6-17; Mark 4:26-34

Narrative Lectionary: Psalm 69:1-16 (Lament)

Our first selection of the Hebrew Scriptures for now in this Season After Pentecost focuses on the rise of the kings, first with the call of Saul. In this passage, the prophet Samuel grieves for Saul and God is sorry. Saul has been a miserable failure of a king. But God calls upon Samuel to anoint a new king, and this new king is the youngest of eight sons of Jesse. God flips social convention on its head: God chooses the youngest and the smallest, not the biggest and strongest and eldest. God chooses David, and Samuel anoints him in the presence of his brothers.

In this short passage from the prophet Ezekiel, God is doing something new—taking a branch from a lofty cedar and replanting it on top of a mountain. God’s justice is restorative: God will bring down the high trees and raise up the low trees, making even what was uneven, making right what was wrong. God will restore what has been taken, and will make new what is old. God’s kingdom, or dream of a new heaven and earth, is like this bough, cut away but replanted to flourish, the bringing together of the old and new where every living thing will find a home and be provided for. It was not what God had originally intended, but God restores that intention by replanting, growing again, and providing a new eternal home.

Psalm 20 is a song of blessing, with the leader asking God to bless and protect the people preparing for battle, but reminding them not to put their trust and hope in chariots and weapons, but in God alone. The leader calls upon God to give victory to their earthly king, and to answer their prayers, for their hope of victory is found only in God.

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15 sings of thanksgiving to God, giving thanks to God from dawn to dusk, in music and worship declaring the Lord is their God. Those who abide in God have deep roots and bear fruit, and are full of life.

2 Corinthians 5:6-17 is Paul’s declaration that affirms what the prophets said years ago: God is making all things new. In Christ, we are a new creation, and sin and death have passed away and no longer have a hold on us. We no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ. We are a new creation, and we no longer can see each other in the same light, no longer from a worldly, human point of view. We see each other as integral to the body of Christ, a new creation dependent upon Christ and each other, instead of ourselves.

Jesus tells two parables in this passage from Mark, one about the kingdom of God being like someone who scattered seed, almost carelessly, and waits until it is ripe to harvest. The second is comparing the kingdom of God to a mustard seed that grows into a bush, a bush that is almost impossible to remove but becomes the home for birds in the air. The kingdom of God emerges from the ordinary, from the unexpected. The kingdom of God is growing here on earth, if we can perceive it, and is among us already.

The Narrative Lectionary is focusing on the Psalms and the theme this week is Lament in Psalm 69. The psalmist is in utter despair. Everything is falling apart around them, their enemies are close, and they feel there is no escape. Where is God when we feel like we are about to drown, about to suffocate in our problems and the troubles of the world around us? The psalmist decries those who accuse them falsely, but acknowledges before God their own wrongdoings. They know they are not without blame for some of their choices. However, what they are going through is also wrong. God is good, and God will hear the psalmist’s prayer. The psalmist does not want others’ faith to fail because of what he is going through, but prays for God’s deliverance.

We are called to participate in the kingdom, or reign, or community of God here on earth. When we attempt to do so in worldly ways, we raise up our own kings who will fail us. But when we look to God and God’s ways, we find that the community of God is already among us. We have to look for it, to seek it—and to live into it. We must love and care for one another. We must regard each other as kindred in Christ, no longer from a worldly point of view. We must see each other as a new creation in Christ, in which everything old has passed away, because God is making all things new.

Call to Worship

We walk by faith, not by sight;

 **Our confidence is in Christ who died and was raised for us.**

The love of Christ urges us on,

 **And all of us have died and have risen with Christ.**

If we are in Christ, we are a new creation:

 **Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!**

Come, join in this time of worship:

 **May we experience the new life in Christ now and forever;**

 **May we live and worship in God’s reign forever. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Life, we confess that all too often we are focused on ourselves, on our families, on the people close to us, and we neglect those in need all around. We feel we are justified, we cannot help everyone, but yet you called us to love one another, to life up the poor, pray for the sick, and visit the imprisoned. Help us to see all of Your children as our kindred in Christ. Help us to remember that we are all part of Your Beloved Community and we cannot live for ourselves anymore if we hope to live with You, now and throughout eternity. In the name of Christ, who gave his life for us, and lives again for us, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

In Christ all things are possible, in God all things are new, and the Spirit breathes new life in the world always. There is always hope for the world and hope for you. Live into that hope by becoming hope to others, and know that you are loved and forgiven and have new life in Christ, now and forever. Amen.

Perfect Love, we pray that we might have the courage to live into Your ways. We pray that we might have the courage to love as You have loved us, to lay down our lives for others, to tend to our neighbors the way You tend to us. Help us to participate in You Beloved Community here on earth, as we pray for and hope for throughout eternity. May we be one, as You are one. In the name of Christ, Perfect Love that laid down his life for us, we pray. Amen.