Worship Resources for June 14th, 2020—Second Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Genesis 18:1-15 (21:1-7) and Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19; Exodus 19:2-8a and Psalm 100; Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Job, Job 3:1-10; 4:1-9; 7:11-21

The season after Pentecost has two choices for the Hebrew Scriptures and Psalms. The first choice follows the beginnings of the ancient Hebrew people, and the first half of the season specifically follows Abraham and Sarah and their descendants. Abraham shows kindness and hospitality to three strangers on the road, who tell Abraham that Sarah will have a son. When Sarah overhears it, though, she laughs, because she and Abraham are too old—but God heard her, and in due time, she bore a son, and she named him Isaac, which means Laughter.

The psalmist praises God for answered prayers in Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19. God has heard the petition of the psalmist and the singer declares their vows to God. The psalmist sings of how they are God’s servant and the child of God’s servant girl, echoing the faithfulness of the previous generation as well as their own. The psalmist will praise God and fulfill their vows in the courts of the temple.

The second selection for the Hebrew Scriptures follows the prophets and God’s faithfulness, beginning with Exodus 19:2-8a. God speaks to Moses on Mount Sinai for the first time, and declares that though the whole earth is God’s, God has chosen the Israelites to be a priestly people, a holy nation of all nations. All God asks is for the people to keep the covenant and obey God’s voice. The people declare before Moses and the elders that everything God has spoken, they will do.

Psalm 100 is a call to worship, calling the people to make a joyful noise to God. They are God’s people, and the psalmist calls them to enter the temple, the gates and the courts inside, with praise and thanksgiving. God’s steadfast love and faithfulness endure to all generations.

The Epistle reading begins its series in Romans (there was a brief series of passages from Romans during Lent). In Romans 5:1-8, Paul begins this section of his letter to the church in Rome by speaking of the endurance of faith, even in the midst of suffering, leads to hope. Paul doesn’t speak of suffering as something to be desired, but rather a fact of the life of faith. For Christ suffered and died for us even before we were believers, Paul argues, and that is proof of God’s love and faithfulness.

Jesus’ ministry takes off in Matthew 9:35-10:23. Jesus has compassion for the crowds who are coming to him, and knows there is great work to be done. The laborers are few for the harvest, so Jesus sends out his disciples to minister among the crowds. The disciples were to take nothing with them, but to rely on the hospitality of others while they healed the sick and cast out demons and raised the dead. They were called by Jesus to go where they were welcomed. Jesus knew they wouldn’t always be welcomed, but to not make a big deal of it—shake the dust off their sandals and move on. However, Jesus does warn them of coming persecutions, but not to worry about it—those who endure to the end will be saved, and if they are persecuted in one town, to flee to the next, for there will always be another place to go before the Son of Man comes.

The Narrative Lectionary continues with its series on Job in selections from chapters 3, 4, and 7. The Narrative Lectionary skips over chapter 2, in which Job’s health suffers and he develops sores on his body. At this, three of Job’s friends come to be with him, and at first they say nothing, just sitting with him in his suffering. Finally, though, Job opens his mouth. He does not curse God, but curses the day he was born. His friend Eliphaz tells him that he has sinned, that is why this bad stuff has happened, because Job is impatient, wanting an answer from God. Job’s response recalls the mythology of surrounding peoples, the Sea and the Dragon, chaotic forces in the world, as indeed the figure of Job is also shared in the mythology of the surrounding peoples. Job pleads for God to leave him alone, and if he has sinned, why hasn’t God forgiven him? He’s suffered enough.

The call to follow Jesus is not an easy one, especially in this covid-19 world that we are in. When we look at the ministry of Jesus, as he sent the disciples to teach, heal, raise the dead, and to go where they would be welcomed and received, we recognize that to follow Jesus is to be sent out. It is not to remain in one place. Right now, even if we legally can gather to worship in our church buildings, we must heed the call of Jesus and go where we are needed, to do what is needed—and to do our part to keep our neighbors healthy and safe, which may not be in the church building. We are also called to remember those who are grieving—and grief may be related to death, or loss. Loss of jobs, graduations, postponed weddings, as well as loss of the rituals surrounding death, such as funerals. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Call to Worship (Psalm 100)

**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.**

**Worship the Lord with gladness;**

**come into God’s presence with singing.**

**Know that the Lord is God.**

**It is God that made us, and we belong to God;**

**we are God’s people, and the sheep of God’s pasture.**

**Enter God’s gates with thanksgiving, and God’s courts with praise.**

**Give thanks to God, bless God’s name.**

**For the Lord is good;**

**God’s steadfast love endures forever,**

**and God’s faithfulness to all generations.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God Who Made Us, You made us to be one body in Christ. Right now, we may feel fractured and scattered. We may feel lonely, or forgotten. We may feel useless and worn. God, You see us. You know us. You call us to be one, even when we cannot be together in person. Remind us that we belong to You and to each other. Lovingly nudge our hearts, to remember that we are needed, that we have gifts to share with each other and the world, and that we are loved. May we be gentle with each other, as You are gentle with us, O God, and may we nurture and care for each other in these trying times as we care for our own bodies. In the name of Christ, to whom we belong, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God knit us together in the womb, and knows each and every part of us. God calls us by name and breathes life into our fragile bodies. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Know this. Know how much you are loved, and needed. Go with the grace, peace, and forgiving love of God, to bless and forgive and love others. Amen.

Prayer

Ancient of Days, You led our ancestors away from the land they had known into a promised homeland. You gave two elders, weary from traveling their whole lives, the promise of a future as they offered hospitality to strangers. You fulfilled their hopes through the birth of a child who made them laugh. The stories of old live in us, for their hope lives in us. Ancient of Days, remind us of the ways our ancestors trusted in You during difficult times of famine and hardship, and how You journeyed with them, as You continue to journey with us. May we learn from their stories through our scriptures and songs, and live into their hope and promise by listening and loving Your commandments and way of life. In Your name we pray. Amen.