Worship Resources for June 19th, 2016—Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Father’s Day

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 19:1-15a or Isaiah 65:1-9; Psalm 22:19-28 or Psalms 42 and 43; Galatians 3:23-39; Luke 8:26-39

Narrative Lectionary: Reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Right after Elijah showed up the prophets of Baal in chapter 18, and right after thousands of Israelites believed, and right after it says that there were one hundred prophets kept safe by Obadiah who were loyal to God, Elijah has a moment of doubt and struggle. When Jezebel threatens to kill him, he runs off and is ready to die, dejected and feeling alone. But the angel of God encourages Elijah, and he continues on. When Elijah finally speaks to God, he claims to be the only one left. We know from the previous chapter he is not, but Elijah is having a major crisis of faith. God doesn’t come in the mighty acts of fire and earthquakes and mighty winds—but in the sound of sheer silence, God is present with him. In that moment of feeling most alone, it is God who is with him.

In Isaiah 65:1-9, God promises that a remnant shall return, and God sees that not all have turned to wickedness. But many of the people have done the opposite of what God has desired. They have broken the commandments and not followed God’s ways, and yet claim to others that they are too holy, too deserving, too good. They will live with the consequences of their actions, but God will not punish all—for God will deliver some of their descendants to the land that was promised them, because God upholds God’s covenant, even when the people do not.

In this part of Psalm 22:19-28, the psalmist calls upon God for deliverance and calls upon the congregation to praise God. God came when the psalmist cried out for help, and the poor and others in need will receive their needs from God. God is the one who has dominion over the whole earth, and over all the people.

Psalm 42 speaks of yearning for God, and God being the one that satisfies our longing. God is the one in whom we should put our hope, even during the most discouraging times, for God hears our prayers and our cries.

Psalm 43 is probably a continuation of Psalm 42 with the theme of God being the one who satisfies us, in whom we should put our hope. Here, the psalmist cries out for vindication, for justice from oppression. The psalmist calls upon God to send out God’s light and truth, and the psalmist proclaims that they will sing praise to God for God’s justice.

Galatians 3:23-39 is the crux of Paul’s argument. Paul proclaims that the divisions that are still being upheld in early Christianity are not the way of Christ, but also not seen by God, because in Christ Jesus there are no dividing walls of Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. If one is baptized in Christ, one is equal with the other. All then belong to Christ, all then have been adopted into the family tree of Abraham.

Luke 8:26-39 tells of the time Jesus and his disciples encountered the man from Garasene, who had a legion of demons in him that tormented him. The man sometimes had to be chained up because the unclean spirit would seize him, and he would wear no clothes. Jesus casts out the demons from the man, but only after they beg to be cast into the herd of pigs—also unclean—and the pigs run down into the lake and are drowned. This is a strange story in our Gospel accounts, but the man who had been possessed comes to sit at the foot of Jesus, wearing clothes, and appearing to be in his right mind. But the people want Jesus to leave. They are scared of what he is able to do. Instead of recognizing all the good that Jesus has done, they are afraid of what Jesus is changing.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its series in 2 Corinthians and looks at the theme of Reconciliation. In this letter, Paul makes reference in earlier chapters to divisions and hurt feelings, and has urged forgiveness and reconciliation. In this passage, Paul proclaims that Christ has reconciled himself to us. In sharing in his death and resurrection through our baptism, we are made new—everything old has passed away. Though Christ did not sin, he died as a sinner so that we might be reconciled to him. Christ died for all, and that love that Christ has for all of us urges Paul and the early Christians in this ministry. We are called not to look at each other from a human point of view, that looks at our faults and failings, but as new creation in Christ—for the old has passed away, and all has been made new.

It is hard to let go of the past, hard to let go of our fears. The people in Garasene were more afraid of the change that Jesus was bringing, than they were of the demons that lived there. Elijah was more afraid of what lay ahead of him than the danger he had just been through—making things out to be more dire than they possibly were. The early Christian leaders were more afraid of changing to welcome everyone in as Christ had, to the point they were separating themselves from the Gentile believers. Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. In Christ, our fears are shed, and we are free to embrace the newness that is Christ’s love for us and for the world.

Call to Worship

Sometimes we are afraid to make that first move;

**Spirit of Life, call us out of our fear into hope.**

Sometimes we think the past is better simply because it is what we know;

**Spirit of Life, call us into the unknown, to move without fear into the newness of God’s love.**

Sometimes we go with the flow because it is too hard to challenge the status quo;

**Spirit of Life, call us into Your ways of love and justice.**

**Holy Spirit, call us into this time of worship, to be transformed by Your love and grace. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Justice and Mercy, we confess that at times we have taken the easy way. We confess that we have looked for the shortest route, the simplest path, the minimal requirements of faith. Forgive us for not embracing the fullness of Your call to love, justice, and mercy. Forgive us for being so selfish that we would look for our own salvation and not the well-being of others. Forgive us for believing we could love You without loving our neighbors as ourselves. Call us to the way You have shown us. Call us to the life You have given us, the life that calls us to care for others the way You have cared for us. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

In Christ we are made a new creation. In Christ we are given new life. Everything old has passed away; everything has become new! Know that you are a new creation in Christ, and nothing can hold you back now. Nothing can separate you from God’s love. Go and share the Good News. Amen.

Prayer

Loving One, You loved the world into creation; You loved us into Your body. Cast out the selfishness that is in our hearts. Cast out the judgmental nature from our minds. Cast out the smug attitudes and self-justification that overtakes our soul. Fill us with Your love, a love that is selfless, a love that is forgiving, a love that is humble. Remind us of Your call to be last of all and servant of all, to cast out everything that holds us back from the life You have intended for us. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Litany for Father’s Day

Thank you, God, for all those who have loved us dearly

**For all parental figures in our lives that showed us Your love, we give thanks.**

Thank you, God, for those who have stepped into the role when others were absent

**For step-fathers and uncles, brothers and caregivers, teachers and coaches**

**who made a difference in our lives, we give thanks.**

Thank you, God, for our fathers and grandfathers

For all those who have mirrored Your love in our lives, we give thanks.

We lift up to you, O God, those fathers who have gone on

**For those who are grieving, for those who feel an absence on this day, we pray.**

We lift up to you, O God, all those who have had difficult relationships with their fathers

**For those who were harmed by their fathers and others who should have loved them,**

**we pray, and we cry out, and we seek justice.**

Loving God, You are the one Jesus called “Abba, Father.” Abba God, love us as Your children. Remind us that in You were are all Your family. You are our Mother and Father, and have loved us in ways no earthly parent could. We give You thanks for all the loving fathers and step-fathers, all those who have shown Your love to us the way You have loved Your Son, Jesus the Christ. May we all reflect Your image in the ways we love our children, and in how we love one another, knowing that our worldly families are not perfect, but Your love is. Abba God, we pray in Your name. Amen.