Worship Resources for June 21st, 2015—Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 17:1a, 4-11, 19-23, 32-49 or 1 Samuel 17:57-18:5, 18:10-16 or Job 38:1-11; Psalm 9:9-20 or Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32 or Psalm 133; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41

Narrative Lectionary: Psalm 27:1-6 (Trust)

We have three choices from among the Hebrew Scriptures today. The first two follow the first thread of our Hebrew Scripture selections from the Revised Common Lectionary focusing on the rise of the kings. The first reading from 1 Samuel 17 is the story of the Philistine Goliath and his defeat by David. The second selection of 1 Samuel 17 and 18 follows right after, with the relationship between David and Jonathan and Saul’s possession by a demon and decline as an effective king. David wins the hearts of the people around him, and this threatens Saul, though all of David’s success helps Saul.

Another selection for the Hebrew Scriptures is from Job 38. God has been silent since chapter two, and re-enters the story of Job, answering Job from out of the whirlwind. Job has been demanding to know where God is when all the world has crashed down on him, and it turns out God has been very busy making sure the world continues to turn. It is easy to see our problems as bigger than the world, but God reminds Job that the world is bigger than him. In the aftermath, God does restore Job, for God has heard Job, but Job needed to remember that God is the God of the Universe.

Psalm 9:9-20 speak of God being the God of the Oppressed. God does not forget those who are suffering, those who struggle under oppression. The psalmist calls upon God to rise up, knowing that God has heard their prayers. Their God is the God of the poor, the God who delivers, the God who hears.

Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32 sings thanksgiving to God who delivers the people. The psalmist is recounting an event in which some of the people were at sea and a storm came, and God delivered the people on the ships from the storm. God’s love is for the people, and God hears the prayers of the people.

Psalm 133 is a very short psalm about the blessings of being in unity. The psalmist praises times when the people are united as a family, as children of God, and this unity is like an anointing of oil upon the beard of Aaron or the dew on Mt. Hermon—unity is a blessing from God.

2 Corinthians 6:1-13 urges the church in Corinth to be open to Paul and Timothy, and to the missionaries visiting them, because there have been earlier conflicts that are still not resolved. Paul is striving to show the church in Corinth that he loves them, and that they are loved by God, no matter what they have gone through. Paul calls upon the church to open wide their hearts, because they are the only ones holding themselves back.

Mark 4:35-41 is the story of Jesus calming the storm. Jesus has taken a nap while the disciples are with him in a boat, and a great windstorm has risen. Jesus is asleep in the back of the boat, and the disciples are afraid. They scold Jesus when they wake him up: “Don’t you care that we are dying?” Jesus rebukes the storm, but also rebukes them for their fear and lack of faith. Jesus was always with them, they just didn’t believe he was fully present because he was asleep!

The Narrative Lectionary is focusing on the Psalms, and the theme today is Trust in Psalm 27:1-6. The psalmist sings confidently that God will be with them even when they are outnumbered, even when there is war. There is nothing to be afraid of when one’s trust is in God. The psalmist only longs to be with God forever, and to behold the beauty of God.

Everyone wants to know why bad things happen. We all want to make meaning out of life, and we all wonder where God is when those bad things happen. We cannot answer why all bad things happen—we can understand the consequences of our actions, but even then—things happen that we do not deserve. We don’t understand why these things have happened. But the question of where God is—Job hears God’s answer in the whirlwind, that God is active in the created world around us. For the disciples, Jesus has been with them all along, but they forgot when he fell asleep that they could still trust him. God is always there. God does not cause bad things to happen, but we do face the consequences of the actions of others and ourselves. However, as Paul writes in Romans 8, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. If nothing can separate us from God’s love and God is love, nothing can separate us from God. God is with us.

Call to Worship

If God is for us, who is against us?

 **God gave the only Son for us.**

Who is to condemn us?

 **Christ Jesus intercedes for us.**

What will separate us from the love of Christ?

 **Neither death nor life, nor anything in all creation**

 **Can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Come, follow Jesus, who gave his life for us.

 **Come, worship God, for God’s love is always with us.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Creator God, You made the world, and sometimes we feel that You have left us behind. We feel alone and abandoned. We want answers and when they don’t come, we feel lost. Make Your presence known to us, O God. May we feel Your Spirit among us. May we know that wherever two or three are gathered in Your name, You are among us. Even if we feel hopeless, give hope to others, O God. May their prayers give us courage and strength. May we pray for others to have their faith renewed, so that our own may be lifted up. In the name of Christ, who walks this journey of life with us, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God is with us. As long as the wind blows, we know God’s Spirit is here, from the first breath of creation. As long as we love one another, we know God’s love is among us. We are the body of Christ in this world. May we renew our faith by renewing hope for others. Go, become the living hope of Christ in this world, and find Your own faith renewed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Prayer

God who causes stars to burn and energy to flow, may Your presence be made known to us in new ways. When we wonder where You are, shine Your light in new ways. When we wonder why bad things are happening, help us to find all of Your goodness. When we feel hopeless, help us to become Your hope in the world. You have created us out of stardust, and breathed into us life. In You, all things are possible, and all things are created new. May our faith be renewed in You, for You are always doing something new. Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, may we come to know You in new ways on this journey of faith. Amen.