Worship Resources for June 21st, 20202—Third Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Genesis 21:8-21 and Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17 or Jeremiah 20:7-13 and Psalm 69:7-10 (11-15) 16-18; Romans 6:1b-11; Matthew 10:24-39

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Job, Job 14:7-15; 19:23-27

In this season after Pentecost, the first selection of the Hebrew Scriptures follows the family of Abraham and Sarah and their descendants, our ancestors in faith. After Isaac was born, Sarah’s tolerance of Abraham’s first son and his mother was cut short when Sarah witnessed Isaac and Ishmael playing together. She had Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away, and once in the wilderness, without any water, Hagar gave in to despair. She couldn’t bear to watch her son die, so she left him under a bush, asking God to not let her live through the death of her child. But God heard the voice of Ishmael, and spoke to Hagar, telling her not to be afraid. God promised to make a great nation of him, and when Hagar opened her eyes, she found a wellspring of water. God was with Ishmael and Hagar, and brought them to a new home.

The psalmist is in distress in Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17. They know that God is good and forgiving, but they are poor and needy, in the woes of despair. They call upon God to listen to their cry, for they know that there is no God but God, who can do great and wondrous things. The psalmist calls upon God, remembering their mother who was also God’s servant as a sign of the faithfulness of generations. They ask for a sign, so that others will know that God is the one who brings help and comfort.

The second selection of the Hebrew scriptures follows the prophets. Jeremiah calls out in 20:7-13 with the anguish of being a prophet—he is scorned and ridiculed by others when he speaks the words of God, but when he doesn’t speak, when he tries to keep silence, it is like a fire burning up his bones and he can’t contain it. Even his close friends are looking for a chance to see Jeremiah break down. But Jeremiah knows that God is with him “like a dread warrior.” Those who persecute him will not prevail. God is the one who sees our hearts and minds, and Jeremiah knows that God is the one who delivers those in need.

The psalmist speaks of their anguish, their ridicule from others in Psalm 67. Even their friends and family have distanced themselves from them. Others make fun of the psalmist while the psalmist is publicly mourning, and still others gossip and slander them. But the psalmist remains faithful to God and seeks God’s deliverance, knowing God’s steadfast love is good. They call upon God to free them from their enemies.

Paul speaks of freedom from sin in Romans 6, that those of us who believe should not continue in sin, but rather we are freed from sin through our baptism, in sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection. Death no longer has a hold on us, as death has no hold on Christ; therefore, sin has no hold on us. Through our baptism, we are made dead to sin and alive in Christ.

Jesus teaches about discipleship in Matthew 10:24-39. Jesus begins with a warning that he’s been called by those who are against him Beelzebul, the devil, and that the disciples will also be called names and maligned by others. However, Jesus tells the disciples to not be afraid. The truth will be proclaimed, and they are called to continue to share what he has taught them. They are loved by God, and God will not let them fail. Jesus continues, stating he hasn’t come to bring peace, but a sword. Jesus’ words bring division. We must decide if we are willing to risk losing everything, including our lives, to follow Jesus—or are we only paying lip service? Those who hold on to the ways of this world will lose. Those who risk losing their life for Jesus will find it.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its summer series on Job in 14:7-15; 19:23-27. Job is dejected. There is no hope for mortals. When they die, there is no hope in his view for life again. He cries out to God, if only there was some hope that God would hear him, even in the place of the dead. If only God would hear him—if his words were written down, they’d be permanent, and perhaps God would take notice. Job knows that his redeemer lives. Job prays for the day when he will see God, and will be justified, proven right that he did nothing wrong, nothing to deserve what has happened to him.

God is present with us, during our hardships, but also during persecution. Being faithful isn’t simply standing up for what we believe, sometimes it is in the living of our very lives. For some, in simply being who they are, just existing, is enough for others to want to kill them. Right now in the United States, the evil of racism has exposed that for many, black lives do not matter as much as other lives. Jesus knew in his day that those who chose to follow him with their lives might lose their lives. Choosing the way of Jesus means being in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed. Choosing the way of Jesus is choosing the way of peace through justice. Choosing the way of Jesus is choosing love over fear and hate. As Dr. Ibram X. Kendi said in a Facebook post, we resist because we love. This is the way of our lives.

Call to Worship

**God who made the universe, the heavens and earth,**

**Is still creating, now.**

**Jesus the Messiah, born as one of us, who died as one of us,**

**Lives in us, now.**

**The Holy Spirit, moving over the waters of creation,**

**Descending upon the disciples and birthing the church,**

**Moves in us, now.**

**Come, worship God, knowing God’s presence**

**Is with us, now.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess to You that sometimes it’s all too much. It’s all too hard. It’s easier to live into the status quo and try to mind our own business, if we could. Some of us can never rest, because our very lives have been a target by those who call us Other. Some of us can pass by if needed, but our hearts break open at the injustice of the world. All of us are called into accountability with You, O God, in how we live out Your commandments, in how we love one another, in how we pursue justice and practice mercy. Encourage us and empower us, O God, to risk our comfort and security for the sake of Your children. Stir in our hearts a call to resist evil and to seek justice, so we might make peace here on earth as it is in heaven. In the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

May there be peace in your mind, that you are on the path of justice and restoration. May there be peace in your body, that you are made in God’s image, and are God’s beloved. May there be peace in your heart, knowing you are loved and forgiven by God, whose steadfast love endures forever. May there be peace in your soul, the deep peace that comes from God, knowing that the struggles you currently face will not outlast the love God has for you, the hardship will not overpower the light that shines within you. You are God’s child, and God is well pleased with you. Go and live out the commandment to love one another. Amen.

Prayer

God of Justice and Mercy, may Your fire burn brightly in us. May Your fire purify our intentions, consuming what would hold us back, and fuel us to do the work of justice. May Your fire burn in our hearts, to shine brightly in compassion and love for one another. May Your fire bring warmth that nurtures and encourages us in the coldness of the world’s despair. Holy God, may we never fail to pursue justice and to practice mercy, kindness and compassion. May we remember Your steadfast love, made known to us in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.