Worship Resources for June 22, 2014—Second Sunday after Pentecost

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

Our first thread for the Revised Common Lectionary in the Hebrew Scriptures through this season after Pentecost focuses on the stories of origin for Israel—beginning with Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac, and will conclude with the people of Israel arriving to the Promised Land at the end of this season. Genesis 21:8-21 contains the story of Ishmael and Hagar, and their rejection by Sarah and eventually Abraham, but not by God. God’s promises endure even when human promises fail. God’s commitment never waivers, and God is faithful to us always. Even when Hagar feels that all has failed and she is alone, God hears her voice. God hears us, even when we feel our voice is not heard. When the world ignores the cries for justice, God hears and does not forget.

Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17 contains the song of a singer desperate for God’s salvation. The psalmist declares their dependence upon God, and the knowledge that God is the one who is faithful and will forgive. The psalm proclaims that God is the God of all nations, but God also is the God of the individual person, and knows each of us intimately.

Our second thread for the Revised Common Lectionary follows the Prophets. In Jeremiah 20:7-13, Jeremiah tells of his struggle to live out God’s call. He is humiliated in front of the people by what he must proclaim and what he must do. He is called to proclaim God’s judgment to a people who don’t want to hear it. They want to believe that everything will be fine and secure by the political agreements their leaders have made, who didn’t turn to God—and Jeremiah knows that destruction and exile is coming. Everyone has turned against him, but he knows that God is with him, even if he wishes God wasn’t. He knows that God will be faithful and he will remain faithful to God, for he must proclaim God’s justice.

Psalm 69:7-18 echoes the pain of the passage of Jeremiah. To be faithful to God sometimes comes with a cost, especially when one proclaims the message of justice and truth from God. Public humiliation, ridicule, and scorn even by friends and family may happen. The psalmist knows God will be faithful, and sings of God’s steadfast love, and pleads with God to justify them and to set them free from their distress.

Romans 6:1b-11 reminds us that sin is put to death on the cross, that we have died to sin so we have life eternal in Jesus Christ. Sin does not have a hold on us. Our baptism baptizes us into Christ’s death and resurrection, so that we have died like Christ in our baptism, and are now alive in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 10:24-39 contains some of the hard sayings of Jesus. Jesus tells the disciples not to be afraid, but to be weary of sin—to be like him, and resist the evil in the world. Jesus tells the disciples this will be difficult—to follow Jesus means that families will be divided. “I have come not to bring peace, but a sword” reminds us that to be faithful to God sometimes will cause us to be in conflict with those around us. To love Jesus is to follow Jesus’ ways, to put others before ourselves, to be willing to risk in order to gain. This is not the safe path. This is not the easy way. This is the way of Christ, which is the way that goes to the cross, that puts sin to death.

Following Jesus is not easy. We may be ridiculed, we may be rejected by those around us, even our friends and family. But to be faithful to God, we must live out God’s ways of love, justice and mercy—all of which may seem foolish to the world and to those around us. But if we remain faithful, God is faithful to us.

Call to Worship

We have been created in the image of God

 **We are created to love our brothers and sisters, all children of God**

Christ has taught us how to love one another

 **And we are called to share that love with the world**

The Holy Spirit moves in us, giving us gifts to do God’s work

 **The Spirit moves us like the wind in the trees**

We go where God is leading us

 **Follow Jesus, and the Spirit will show us the way. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that at times we ignore You and Your ways because we are afraid of being rejected by others. We fail to do justice and loving-kindness; we forget to walk humbly with You. We fall into the ways of the world and look to our own gain instead of the well-being of others. Forgive us. Call us back to hear Your call of justice. Help us to listen to the prophets among us. Guide us back to living in Your ways, even when it is unpopular, even if we face ridicule. Lead us in the path of right-living. In the name of Christ, who conquered the cross, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

There is nothing God will not do for us. Christ went to the cross so that we might know that life is eternal and sin is not. You are forgiven, renewed and restored—live, and help others to live with the knowledge that God loves us all. Amen.

Prayer

Breathe on us, Holy Spirit. Renew in us a sense of purpose, of a life filled with joy, of a heart drawn to justice and mercy. Move us to compassion, to action, to lead lives of hope. Fill us with Your abundant love, so that we may love those who are hard to love, forgive those that are hard to forgive, and may we be reminded that You love us, forgive us, and renew us, every day. In the name of Jesus, who was filled with Your Spirit and resisted temptation, and full of Your Spirit calls us into New Life, we pray. Amen.