Worship Resources for June 23rd, 2019—Second Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 19:1-4 (5-7), 8-15a and Psalm 42 and 43; Isaiah 65:1-9 and Psalm 22:19-28; Galatians 3:23-39; Luke 8:26-39

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Psalms, Psalm 69:1-6 (Matthew 7:7-11)

In the season after Pentecost, there are two selections from the Hebrew Scriptures and for the Psalm readings. The first selection follows the prophets, beginning with Elijah. Elijah and the other prophets of Israel were persecuted by Ahab and Jezebel, the rulers of Israel who worshipped Baal. Elijah is about to give up, and just wants to die. He’s exhausted, frustrated, feels all alone, and is afraid. He prays for God to take his life, but instead, an angel tells Elijah to get up and eat. This happens twice, and finally, he is sustained enough to keep going. He comes to Mount Horeb, where again, he is lonely and angry. God comes to Elijah—not in the mighty forces of wind, earthquakes, and fire that were associated with the gods of his time—but in the sound of sheer silence. The deeds of power and strong words were not what Elijah needed—what he needed in that moment was God’s presence.

In Psalm 42, the psalmist describes their longing for God like a deer in need of water. As the psalmist suffers, they also sing words of hope that God is present with them, that even though they feel as if they are abandoned, they know and trust that God is with them. Psalm 43 continues the psalmist’s plea for vindication in the midst of their own suffering and persecution, but also repeats the refrain of asking why their soul is restless, for their hope is found in God.

The second selection from the Hebrew Scriptures is from the end of Isaiah, part of what some scholars refer to as Third Isaiah. In the return from exile, the prophet recognizes that the people and their leaders are beginning to return to their old ways. Some are taking up the religious and cultural practices of the peoples around them, but God will not destroy the people. Though some offer incense to other gods on the mountains, there will be remnant, who will inherit the mountains of God and settle there, for God dwells with the people, not on a mountain.

The psalmist pleads to God for deliverance from their enemies, both human and creature, in Psalm 22:19-28. The psalmist also calls the congregation to praise God, who has heard the psalmist’s cries. God is the one who has dominion over all the earth, who provides for the poor, and all nations shall worship God.

In Galatians 3:23-39, Paul makes the argument that all are under Christ Jesus, no longer divided as Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. The divisions of the world have no hold for those in Christ, for all are children of God through faith. Keeping the law was what kept their identity before, but now, their identity is in Christ. If they belong to Christ, they are still children of Abraham, for Abraham is the ancestor of all the nations, as God promised.

Jesus heals a man with many demons in Luke 8:26-39. In the land of the Gerasenes, a man possessed by demons lived in the tombs and wore no clothes. He came to Jesus and the disciples and begged for Jesus not to torment him. He was often chained up to keep him from harming himself and others, but he’d break out of the chains. Jesus called the unclean spirit out of the man, and instead sent the demons into the pigs who ran off a cliff. The man, after his encounter with Jesus, put on clothes, sat and talked with him—but the people of the community, who heard what Jesus had done, asked Jesus to leave. Even though he had helped this person, he had disturbed the community, uprooting what they had known. The man asked to come with Jesus, but Jesus told him to go and tell others of what God had done for him.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its series on the Psalms with Psalm 69:1-6. The psalmist is in deep despair, pleading to God for help. The psalmist knows they have made wrong choices and they feel hopeless; the number of their enemies more than they can count. However, the psalmist prays that others will not feel shame or dishonor because of what they’ve done. They pray that God will remain faithful to others despite their confession of their own actions.

Jesus’ words to his disciples in Matthew 7:7-11 are of assurance that God will provide what they need, if they seek it and ask for it. God is the giver of good gifts and will provide, even if they do not deserve it, if they ask and seek.

As we enter this season after Pentecost, through the Hebrew Scriptures we see how our ancestors in faith came to know God differently than others. God was not found in the fires and earthquakes, the destruction around them. God was not found by worshiping on the mountains. Instead, God was with the people on the mountains and in the valleys. God was not found in the violence, but with those who mourn, those who despaired, those who suffered. When the man with demons came from Garasene, Jesus cast the demons out, and then the community wanted Jesus to leave because they were afraid. Perhaps, though they wanted the man with demons to be helped, they were afraid when the demons they had known left and God was actually among them. In this season of Pentecost, we see God is at work around us and through us—and sometimes, that can be quite scary. Sometimes, God does not show up how we expect or want, but God always shows up in the way we need.

Call to Worship

When storms rise upon the earth and in our lives,

 **Christ rides out the storm with us.**

When our world shakes and threatens destruction,

 **God embraces us and keeps us steady.**

When fire burns and smoke chokes everything,

 **The Holy Spirit breathes new life into us.**

In the struggles of the world, we feel the calming presence of God:

 **Enter this space, where your soul may find quiet and rest.**

 **Enter this time to worship our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we have failed to care for the earth You gave us, and instead created our own world that threatens to destroy us. We have created a world in which power is held by the privileged, a world where sin grows sinuous through systems of oppression and destruction. We have created a world that is not Yours. You created a beautiful earth and have revealed to us the promise of Your reign, Your beloved community, in which heaven and earth are one. Help us to live into this wonderful vision by denying the power of this world of our own making, working to stop oppression and injustice around us. Guide us into ways of resisting evil so we might do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with You in Your reign, and to care for this earth that You created for us and for all Your creatures. In Your name, our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sustainer, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance (from Revelation 21:3-4)

The home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with us, and we will be God’s people. God will wipe away all our tears, and death, mourning, and pain will be no more. All of these will pass away, as the reign of God comes. Join together, live into God’s ways of love, justice, and mercy, and know God’s peace as part of the beloved community of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer

God of Love, in the stories we have been taught since our childhood, You have saved the world. Your promise is known in the rainbow, the sign after the storm. In our times of trials and troubles, may we know Your rainbow is still with us. In the struggle for basic human rights and dignity, may we know Your rainbow is over us, protecting us. In moments of despair and discouragement, may we know the waters will not overwhelm us, they will recede, and Your rainbow will come. God of Everlasting Love, may we know Your peace, Your mercy, Your justice, and Your courage, and may we rest assured knowing the storms will cease. Amen.