Worship Resources for June 24—Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

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

Narrative Lectionary: Series on 1 John, 1 John 1:1-4 (John 1:14-16)

This week, there are three choices for the Hebrew scripture and psalm:

The first selection for the Hebrew Scriptures is the story of David slaying Goliath. The showdown had come between the Philistines and the Israelites, and Goliath has issued a challenge to fight in single combat against an Israelite. David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse and the smallest, decides to take up the challenge and offers himself to Saul. Saul refuses him at first because he has no experience as a warrior, but David speaks of how he protected his father’s sheep from wolves, lions, and bears. Saul relents, giving him his armor, but it doesn’t fit David. Instead, David uses the weapons he knows, the skills he has, and slays Goliath.

Psalm 9:9-20 calls upon the people to praise God, who is the defender of the oppressed. The psalmist calls upon God for deliverance from their enemies. God is the one who is on the side of the suffering and the poor, and the wicked (the powerful, the rich, the enemies) will perish. God does not forget the poor and oppressed. The psalmist calls upon God to rise up against their enemies, for they have forgotten God and shall be judged.

The second selection for the Hebrew Scriptures takes place right after the first selection, with David being presented before Saul for slaying Goliath. Saul’s son Jonathan and David become beloved of one another, bound to one another heart and soul. David becomes the servant warrior of Saul, succeeding wherever Saul sends him. But Saul is tormented by an evil spirit, and tries to kill David. Even though Saul is in awe of David, he also is afraid of him, and several times will both praise him and try to kill him.

Psalm 133 is a short song of blessing, probably sung at a royal wedding, when kindred dwell together in unity. It is a blessing when there is peace in the family, peace in the clan, peace among the people.

The third selection this week comes from Job (Job will come up again this fall in the Revised Common Lectionary, including this passage). God finally answers Job in chapter 38, after thirty-six chapters of silence, and Job demanding an answer from God. God answers Job out of the whirlwind and begins to question him: “Where were you when I made the earth?” In other words, who are you to question where God has been? God has been with you, all along, and God has been in the world, all along. God responds to Job by questioning Job’s reasons for demanding an answer to begin with. After this passage, Job declares that he repents and withdraws his question.

The psalmist begins Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32 by calling the people to give thanks to God, for God’s steadfast love and goodness are forever. The psalmist recalls a time when some travelers were aboard ships, and a storm came upon them. They cried out to God, and the storm was stilled, and they arrived safely to shore. The survivors were glad, and the psalmist, in recalling the story, calls upon the congregation to give thanks and praise to God, for God’s steadfast love and wonderful works.

The writer (presumably Paul) begins 2 Corinthians 6:1-13 with quoting the prophet Isaiah, that now is the time. Now is the time to accept God’s grace, but not in vain. The writer lays out all of the ways they have suffered and lived for the Gospel, and yet the church in Corinth has refused to open their hearts fully to what God is doing in Jesus Christ. The church has not accepted these messengers and their message. The writer urges them to open their hearts and receive the wisdom of the Gospel, to not be closed off as they have been.

Jesus calms the storm in Mark 4:35-41. The disciples and Jesus have crossed the lake in the evening in a boat, and a great windstorm arises—but Jesus is asleep in the back of the boat. The disciples, afraid for their lives, wake up Jesus and asks him if he cares whether they die or live. Jesus rebukes the wind and tells the waves to be still, and a dead calm arises. Jesus then turns to the disciples and asks them why they are afraid, why they still do not have faith. They are amazed and ask, “Who is this, that the wind and the waves obey him?” They have been spending weeks traveling together, preaching and healing—and they still do not know who Jesus is. They are afraid and give in to fear, and they are full of awe and wonder at who he is when things go well.

The Narrative Lectionary begins a second series, this time on 1 John, for the next four weeks. The writer of 1 John introduces the letter by stating this is a declaration of what they have heard and seen with their own eyes, what has been declared from the beginning, and that the word of life was revealed through Jesus Christ. The reason for this letter is to have fellowship with one another, as their fellowship is with God and with the Son, Jesus Christ. The purpose of this letter is a revelation and declaration of who Christ is for this community, to those who may not know or have heard.

This passage is paired with John 1:14-16, declaring that the Word became Flesh and lived among us. The writer and community have seen the glory of Christ, as a father’s only son, and have received this grace and truth.

What holds us back in faith? Often it is fear. As Yoda said, “Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering.” Fear keeps us from trusting God. Fear makes us believe everything is going down and there’s nothing we can do about it. Fear makes us believe that the problem is too big and we cannot overcome it, or that we must use old methods and old ways to get by. David let go of the old armor that didn’t fit him and trusted in God and his own gifts. Jesus asked the disciples why they still had no faith. Paul asks the church in Corinth to open their hearts and experience what God is doing through Christ Jesus. Fear holds us back, but love sets us free.

Call to Worship

Open wide your hearts;

 **Trust in God, who made you and the whole earth.**

Open wide your minds;

 **Trust in Jesus, who showed us the way by laying down his life for us.**

Open wide your soul;

 **Trust in the Spirit, who continues to guide us on the journey of faith.**

Open your lives to God:

 **For perfect love casts out fear, and in God’s love we trust.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we have paid lip service to Scripture, and have failed to follow what it teaches. We have quoted the Bible without rolling up our sleeves. We have studied Scripture without opening our hearts to refugees and victims of violence. We have memorized verses without loving our neighbors as ourselves. Forgive us where we have built walls. Forgive us where we have constructed cages around what we despise. Call us into Your ways of justice. Call us to confess our sins of ignorance, to repent of our ways, and to work to repair what is broken. In the name of Christ, who was despised, imprisoned, and killed because of our ways, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

We see now only in a mirror, dimly, but one day we will see face to face. Right now, we know very little; one day we will know fully. As we become aware of our sins, we are confronted with our wrongdoings. But when we turn to God, we accept God’s love and grace, and work to repair the world. Know that God forgives you, loves you, and is calling you right now into the work of healing and restoration. Get to work, and know that you have help; you have one another. You are God’s beloved children—together, let us love and rebuild. Amen.

Prayer

Healing God, You molded and shaped the Earth out of the violent birth of the universe. You bring restoration out of destruction. You brought a people out of slavery, a nation out of exile. You brought the wanderers out of the wilderness and made streams rise in the desert. You bring us through the trials and tribulations of our lives. You bring healing out of brokenness. Help us to heal, and to be healers in this world, for the world is broken, wounded, and violent. Help us to fulfill Your intention, for us to care for the earth, and to care for one another, and to love as Christ loved us. Amen.