Worship Resources for June 28th—Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Genesis 22:1-14 and Psalm 13; Jeremiah 28:5-9 and Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18; Romans 6:12-23; Matthew 10:40-42

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Job, 31:35-37, 38:1-11 (25-27)

In the first selection for the Hebrew scriptures in this season after Pentecost, we follow the stories of the family of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, and their descendants, our ancestors of the faith. In Genesis 22:1-14, Abraham heard God call him to take Isaac, “his only son,” to the land of Moriah to sacrifice him. Though Abraham had another son Ishmael through Hagar, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. Though God had promises for Hagar and Ishmael, God’s covenant would be with Abraham’s descendants—yet Abraham was told by God to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham did not hold back Isaac. He brought him to Moriah, took Isaac with him to worship, and then bound him and drew his knife. But just before he was about to kill him, the angel of the Lord called out for Abraham to stop, and provided a ram instead. While some interpretations of this story suggest that God tested Abraham and this is a story about faithfulness to God, other scholars believe this is a story showing that God was different than the other gods of Abraham’s time—this God did not desire child sacrifice. It is a disturbing story in our scriptures, one that we must wrestle with in understanding historical and cultural context, in light of the abuse of children in religious institutions over the years.

Psalm 13 is a song of lament to God, for the psalmist feels forgotten and alone. Their pain and sorrow are too much to bear. They need some sign of hope—“give light to my eyes”—or they will die, and their enemies will prevail. Yet the psalmist puts their trust in God’s steadfast love, knowing that God will see them through, that God is their salvation.

The second selection of the Hebrew scriptures follows the prophets. In this selection from Jeremiah 28:5-9, Jeremiah was at odds with another prophet who also claimed to speak for God. Jeremiah knew that the easy way would not come. The prophets before him spoke of war and famine. Hananiah was prophesying that the people would return from exile soon and there would be peace. Jeremiah would be thrilled if this was to be true, but Jeremiah added that time will tell—if a time of peace comes, then they know Hananiah’s words were true.

The psalmist sings of God’s faithfulness and covenant with the people, through King David and his descendants, in Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18. The second part of this selection praises those who celebrate God in the festival celebration. God is their shield and protector, and the king is under God.

The Epistle readings continue in Romans with 6:12-23, continuing Paul’s discourse on sin. Sin no longer has a hold on us because we are under grace, but we still should not sin. Instead, we should live as people obedient to Christ instead of the ways of this world. We are now obedient to the teachings in our heart, for we have been set free from the ways of this world. Sin and death have no hold on the faithful. The ways of this world—sin—leads to death, but the way of Christ leads to eternal life.

This brief Gospel lesson of Matthew 10:40-42 speaks of welcoming Christ. Jesus taught the disciples, teaching them that whoever welcomed them welcomed Christ. Whenever we welcome one another, we welcome Christ into our lives, and therefore God. How we show hospitality to each other is how we welcome God in our lives.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its series on Job in 31:35-37, 38:1-11 (25-27). Job wishes he could confront God in court (the setting at the beginning of Job was the heavenly courtroom, with Ha-satan, rendered as Satan, the divine Accuser or prosecutor). He wishes he could deliver God an indictment, for where is God when all this has happened to him? But then, in chapter 38, God answers Job. God responds to Job’s indictment with his own line of questioning: where was Job when God laid the foundations of the earth? Where was Job when God laid the cornerstones, when God set up the heavens, prescribed the limits of the seas? In verses 25-27, God asks Job, who is the one who makes rivers to channel the rain? Who brings rain in the desert that is empty of human life, to satisfy the land? In other words, the earth also has needs and God provides for it. God is the God of all creation, so who is Job to question God?

God has called us to a way of life that we do not always understand. The ways of this world do not match up to the way of God. Sometimes we hear the call from the world and mistake it for the call of God, as perhaps Abraham did. We fall into the ways of sin in this world, of selfish desire, of listening for a word that pleases others as Hananiah did, instead of listening to God as Jeremiah did. Christ calls us into a different way of life: listening as hospitality. Welcome God into your space by welcoming others. Welcoming the most vulnerable among us is how we welcome God.

Call to Worship

**Welcome one another into this moment,**

**for Christ has welcomed us.**

**When we welcome one another,**

**we welcome God.**

**Whenever we extend hospitality to a stranger,**

**we extend hospitality to God.**

**Welcome, Creator God, into our lives.**

**Welcome, Christ our Lord, into our hearts.**

**Welcome, Holy Spirit, in this place.**

**Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy One, we are tempted by the life this world has to offer—a chance at worldly comforts of wealth and possessions, worldly status of fame. We are tempted by those idols that promise us freedom from need and fear. We are taught that hard work comes with sacrifice, but we sacrifice the wrong things: the environment, our health, sometimes even friendships and family. Forgive us when we make sacrifices to idols. Forgive us when we do not worship You. Forgive us when we do not remember to deny ourselves, take up Your cross, and follow You. Call us into Your ways, and away from the temptation of this world. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God’s love is a wellspring that gushes into eternal life. God’s love cannot be held back, it overflows again and again. God’s love is for you. You are God’s child. Take heart; your sins are forgiven. Now go, and live into this good news, knowing that God’s love is overflowing in you, pouring out to others. Love one another, and live, for the abundance of God’s love, grace, and forgiveness has no end. Amen.

Prayer

Welcoming God, welcome us into Your pace of life. Guide us to slow down and breathe deep. Remind us to take off our shoes, to take off what is dragging us or pushing us ahead, for this is holy space that we are in, right now. Remove the yoke from us and take upon our burdens, so that we might feel the pressure ease from our bodies, minds, and spirits. Invite us into Your presence that is always with us, into this way of being in which we are completely in touch with You, in which we know Your Spirit is in each breath. Welcoming God, thank you for welcoming us into Your way of life. In the name of Jesus, who taught us this way, we pray. Amen.