Worship Resources for June 29th, 2014—Third Sunday after Pentecost

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

Our first thread for the Revised Common Lectionary in this season after Pentecost follows the stories of the beginnings of the Israelites, from Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, to the people on the verge of entering their new homeland. This passage in Genesis 22 shows us that the God who has called Abraham and Sarah has a different idea of worship than what the peoples around them practiced. This God does not require child sacrifice, and in fact abhors it. Child sacrifice will be a forbidden practice in Israel, and in this story, God provides a ram instead. By the time we get to the prophets, we will understand that God does not desire sacrifice, that is something human beings created to appease gods, but is a practice not required by God. Abraham does something new because God calls him to a different way, and saves his son Isaac, and sets a new precedent for those who follow this God.

Jeremiah 28:5-9 foretells the return of the exile and that a prophet will come prophesying peace. The past prophets came telling of war and famine, but the one who prophesies peace—when their words come true, then it will be known that God has sent the prophet. Peace is something that not only takes work, but patience. War and destruction are quick, but peace takes time. We must wait, endure, and not lose hope.

Psalm 13 is a short psalm, in which the singer feels forgotten and lost by God. But by trusting in God’s steadfast love, the psalmist’ faith is restored and the psalmist sings praises to God. We know that God’s faithfulness endures forever, but when we remain faithful to God, we will rejoice in the long run.

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18 sings of the faithfulness of God through God’s covenant with Israel, promised through David. Happy are those who celebrate and praise God, for their whole lives praise God in all that they do.

Romans 6:12-23 contains Paul’s argument that sin no longer has a hold on us because of the gift of grace given through Jesus Christ. However, we still should be careful to avoid sin. If we truly follow Jesus, we will avoid sin and follow the ways of Christ. Otherwise, we are still slaves to sin, as Paul says. Following Jesus is the way to eternal life.

Matthew 10:40-42 is Jesus’ welcome statement: “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” Jesus doesn’t say who to not welcome. Jesus doesn’t say who to exclude. Jesus says we are called to welcome all, and that welcome inherently includes hospitality. We are called to meet the basic needs of those who come to us, to not even deny a cup of water.

God has called us to live differently. God has called us away from the ways of the world, and has called us to follow the ways of Christ. Christ calls us into radical hospitality, in which we welcome others because God has welcomed us. Christ does not tell us to reject anyone, but rather to welcome and show hospitality to all, meeting the basic needs of everyone who comes to us.

Call to Worship:

Welcome to this place of worship

**Welcome in the name of the One who created us.**

Welcome to the Spirit that is moving in us

**Welcome to the Christ who welcomes us.**

Welcome to you, for all are part of the body of Christ

**Welcome to you, for we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.**

Welcome to this time of worship

**May all find rest, hope, and fulfilment as we worship Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

We come before You, confessing that we have not welcomed others as we should. We have turned away those that beg, we have ignored the cries of the poor and the hungry, and we have not met the needs of those who have come before us. We have put our own desires above the needs of our neighbors. Forgive us, O God. Call us back to Your ways of mercy, compassion and love. Help us to see our neighbor as ourselves, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to know our neighbor as Christ knows us. In the name of the One who loves us, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

When we are lost, Christ will help us find the way. When we cannot see the light, Christ will light the way. When we are forgotten, Christ remembers us. We are loved, we are welcomed with open arms, and we are embraced by God. Share the good news and know that you are forgiven. Amen.

Prayer

Author of Life, You have written Your covenant into our hearts. You have called us to welcome the stranger, to show compassion to those who are in need, to care for those who mourn. Help us to mold our lives to be more in tune with Your call to welcome others as You have welcomed us. May we witness Your welcome in all that we do. Amen.