Worship Resources for June 3rd, 2018—Second Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20) and Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; Deuteronomy 5:12-15 and Psalm 81:1-10; 2 Corinthians 4:5-12; Mark 2:23-3:6

Narrative Lectionary: Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:3-11 (Matthew 22:34-40)

During the Season after Pentecost, the Revised Common Lectionary has two choices for the Hebrew Scripture and Psalm reading.

The first selection in the Hebrew Scriptures in this season after Pentecost follows the call of the prophet Samuel up through the time of King David. We begin with Samuel’s call by God in 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20). As a young boy, Samuel heard the voice of God calling him, but did not know it was God. After awaking the priest Eli a few times, Eli perceives that it is God calling Samuel, and tells Samuel the next time he hears the voice to say, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” What God has to tell Samuel isn’t good news for Eli’s family, but Eli accepts the words from Samuel, knowing his own children have become corrupt and that he did not stop them. Samuel becomes known as a prophet, that he spoke all the words God gave him without reservation.

Psalm 139 is a beloved personal song of how God knows us. In the selections from this psalm, the psalmist speaks about how God knows the most intimate details of their life, of who they are as a human being, shaped by God before we had form and being. God is beyond our greatest imagination, and yet God knows exactly who we are.

Our second selection from the Hebrew Scriptures in this season after Pentecost is a selection paired with the Gospel reading. This selection is the retelling of the commandment to honor the Sabbath in Deuteronomy. The sabbath was not only made for us, but for all of creation, for all people: a gift from God, a day of rest. The prohibition against work is not meant to be a burden, but meant to be freedom for all laborers, a day to rest and give thanks.

Psalm 81:1-10 is a song of praise to God who relieves our burdens. God is the one who rescued the people from Egypt, who hears the voice of the distressed. God’s voice is a voice that before was unknown, until God revealed it to us, and it is God’s voice we are called to listen to. The psalmist reminds the people they shall have no other gods, for the God who delivered them is the God who calls out to them and hears their cries.

In the passage from 2 Corinthians 4:5-12, the writer (presumably Paul) declares that the proclamation is of Jesus Christ, not of ourselves, for the glory of God. It is the power of God at work in us, and not ourselves, that proclaims Jesus Christ. For a people who had faced persecution, these are words of encouragement, a treasure in clay jars that will survive, for the life of Jesus is made visible in our own bodies, in our own lives. For the early leaders, death may come—whether martyrdom, or suffering, but life will flourish in those who receive the word of God.

Jesus and his disciples pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath day, and Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath in Mark 2:23-3:6. Jesus challenges the strict interpretation of the Sabbath that causes others to suffer, rather than using the Sabbath for good. Jesus and his disciples are causing no harm by plucking heads of grain (but as a rabbi friend once pointed out, you wouldn’t really eat heads of grain raw, either, so Jesus’ action here was provocative). From the leaders point of view, Jesus could have healed that man any other day, but from the view of Jesus and the disciples, this is the moment they meet, the man is in need, and they meet his needs. Jesus declares that humanity wasn’t made for the sabbath, but that the sabbath was made for humanity. It is a gift for all, a gift for us to decide how to honor God.

The Narrative Lectionary is focusing on the Ten Commandments, and this is the second of four sessions. This week, the focus is on the second through fifth commandments—having no other gods before God, having no idols, not misusing God’s name, and honoring the sabbath. The sabbath is made as a blessed day of rest for all of humanity and creation, so that none can be exploited on that day, but all have the freedom to rest from labor.

*(repeated from last week’s resources)* For the next four weeks, the second passage for the Narrative Lectionary is Jesus’ declaration of the greatest commandment: to love God with one’s whole being, and the second, which is like the first, is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus declares that on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Since only the Torah and the Prophets had been fully complied at this point as scripture, Jesus is saying this is the summary of the Bible as they know it.

God knows us, and calls us to do God’s work in the world. God’s commandments were given not to be burdens, but to help us know God’s goodness and love. The time is always right to do the right thing, to do the work Christ has given us to do. How we live our lives ought to glorify God, and be an example of God’s love and grace to the world.

Call to Worship (from Ephesians 2:8-10)

By grace you have been saved through faith;

 **This is not our own doing, this is the gift of God.**

This is not the result of anything we do,

 **So no one may boast or be proud.**

For we are what God has made us,

 **Created in Christ Jesus for good works.**

God prepared this to be our way of life;

 **Come, worship God, and do the work Christ has given you to do.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we are caught up in the busy-ness of the world around us. We confess that we rarely take time for You. There are many distractions in our lives that take us away from family and friends, even from knowing ourselves. However, we often neglect spending intentional time in prayer, meditation, and reflection with You. Forgive us. Help us to turn away from the noise of the world and to pay attention to Your voice. Help us to rise above the distractions and feel the rhythm of the world’s needs for justice and reconciliation. Call us back to You, to one another, and to ourselves, to remember Your created intention for us, to love You and to love one another. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God has searched you and known you. God knows when you sit down and when you rise up. God knows your thoughts and your paths. May God help you to remember that you are known, that are loved, and that you are forgiven. This knowledge is too wonderful at times to recall, so God has planted it in your heart. May you go from this place knowing how great God’s love is for you, and how intimately God knows you. Amen.

Prayer

Good God, You have made us in Your image, and it is good. You made all of creation, and it is good. You have called us to do good work: the work of justice, reconciliation, and peace, and it is good. Help us to restore Your created intention, to build up rather than to tear down, to bridge rather than to gap, to heal rather than destroy. You are Good, and You made us in goodness, and call us to do good work. Help us to see Your goodness all around, even in the most trying of times—may we hold on to Your goodness, Your love, and Your peace. Amen.