Worship Resources for June 4, 2017—Day of Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30; Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

Narrative Lectionary: Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4, Galatians 4:1-7 (and/or Fruits of the Spirit, Galatians 5:16-26; Luke 11:11-13)

On the day of Pentecost, the spring harvest festival of the Jews, Jewish people from all over the known world (the Mediterranean) lived in Jerusalem and came together to celebrate, when suddenly the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus. When the disciples went out to the crowds, they were able to speak in the languages of the Jews from different areas, though the disciples themselves were from Galilee, and they spoke about God’s “deeds of power.” But some scoffed, saying the disciples were drunk. And Peter, bold to declare that Jesus was the Messiah, finds that boldness again in speaking to the crowds and proclaiming that the words of the prophet Joel are being fulfilled in their sight, as the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon them.

God shares the gift of the spirit given to Moses to seventy others in Numbers 11:24-30, after Moses becomes burned out dealing with the complaints of the people. But there are two additional people who are prophesying in the camp, and when the leaders here about it, including Joshua, they complain, but Moses is glad that God has given them the spirit and wishes that all had the spirit of God in them. This passage is one of many that show that the Holy Spirit is known by the good works performed, rather than whether or not one has been sanctioned to do so by a human authority.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b praises God and rejoices in God’s works through creation. All creatures are created by the spirit of God, who renews the earth, and the creatures are fed by God through the earth’s bounty. The psalmist sings their praises to God and pledges to praise God with their whole being, for God is the Creator.

Paul writes of the gifts of the spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13. There are a variety of different gifts, but they are all given by the Spirit of God as the Spirit chooses and none are greater than another. Rather, we are one body in Christ, and all gifts are needed. Paul declares that no matter who we are, we are all baptized into the one body of Christ, and all of our gifts are valuable.

John 20:19-23 contains the story of Jesus breathing upon the disciples (except for Thomas) after the resurrection, so they might receive the Holy Spirit and forgive others of their sins. Jesus declares that as the Father has sent him, so he is now sending the disciples.

John 7:37-39 foretells the coming of the Holy Spirit by Jesus, that those who are thirsty for God will find living water flowing out of their hearts, and this is the Holy Spirit that flows from the believers.

The Narrative Lectionary also focuses on Pentecost, but that through the Holy Spirit, Paul reveals in his letter to the Galatians, all become children of God. We are no longer under the spirits of this world, but under the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5:16-26, Paul differentiates the fruits of the Spirit from the ways of the world, the works of the flesh. Once again, the Spirit is known by the works, and the works of the Spirit are good, works that build up and bless, rather than being self-serving and condemning.

Jesus reminds the people in Luke 11:11-13 that we know what good gifts are; therefore, when God gives us the Holy Spirit, we are able to do far more than we imagine.

It is easy to judge others who do things differently, who have different ways of proclaiming the goodness and truth of God. But it doesn’t matter who they are or what kind of gifts they have, if the works are good, and build up for the kingdom, we are reminded that God chooses who to gift and how to gift them, and that it is not based on our authority or understanding, but on what builds up the reign of God.

Call to Worship

The Spirit is here among us!

**Rejoice in the work of the Spirit!**

The Holy Spirit gives us all gifts for the glory of God,

**When we use our gifts together, we are the body of Christ.**

The Holy Spirit binds us together,

**For we are one in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Come, worship God, who has sent us the Spirit;

**Come, worship God, who has raised Christ from the dead!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Creator God, we confess that at times we feel useless, helpless to stop the world’s suffering, too weak and small to make any difference. At times we give up, because the needs are too great and the evils of the world too intense. Remind us that the Spirit is always with us, and the gifts of the Spirit are good and are used for building up Your reign on earth. Renew Your Spirit in us, so that we might have the strength to face injustice, to stop hate, and to work together with our marginalized and oppressed kindred in the world to bring Your justice, Your hope, and Your peace to the world. In the name of Christ, who embodied this love so fully that we are called to follow, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Embrace the gifts of the Spirit, and become kingdom-builders. Embrace the gifts of the Spirit, and become peacemakers. Embrace the gifts of the Spirit, and become justice-seekers. Embrace the gifts of the Spirit, knowing that in Christ you are forgiven, and the Spirit will show you the way that leads to eternal life. Amen.

Prayer

Triune God, throughout our history and tradition we have known You in these ways, but we have known You by many names, individually and collectively. Yet the most powerful name You speak is our own, for You call us into Your fold, called us Beloved, and called us Your children. You have given us the wonderful gifts of the Spirit, and call us to use them to bless and build up. May we embrace the name Beloved, and use the gifts You have given us to proclaim the belonging of all to Your Beloved Community. Amen.