Worship Resources for June 5, 2016—Third Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Kings 17: 8-24; Psalm 30 or Psalm 146; Galatians 1:11-24; Luke 7:11-17

Narrative Lectionary: 2 Corinthians 4:1-5, Treasurer in Clay Jars

Both selections for the Hebrew Scriptures this Sunday come from the same part of 1 Kings 17—one choice is to read vs. 8-16, the other to read 17-24, or a third, to read both. Both parts make up the story of the widow at Zarephath and her son. In the first half of the story, Elijah has been called upon by God to go visit this widow who will feed him, but when he finds her, he finds she has nothing left—she is planning to make a last meal for her child and herself, and then they will die. But Elijah tells her that the jar of meal and the jug of oil will not run out, and it is true—they are able to eat for several days. However, in the second half of this passage, the son becomes ill and dies, and the widow is angry at Elijah. She is also angry at herself, believing that some past sin has been responsible for his illness and death. Elijah is angry at God, too, though he doesn’t show it to the widow—and after stretching himself out on the body of the boy three times, the boy is revived, and the widow believes that Elijah is a man from God.

Psalm 30 sings praise to God, for the psalmist has seen God’s redemption and salvation. The psalmist has experienced restoration after facing death, rejoicing after mourning, and calls upon the people to give God praise.

Psalm 146 sings praise to God who is the true ruler of the earth. Princes and kings are human and will fail the people, and eventually they will die. Their plans die with them, but God’s plan is life, known in the creation of the world. God is the one who gives justice and lifts up the oppressed. God watches out for all the vulnerable in the world, while our worldly leaders may fail us.

Paul speaks of his conversion experience in his own words in Galatians 1:11-24. Paul tells his story so that they might understand the crux of his argument in the letter is true—God shows no partiality between Jews and Gentiles, but the controversy of the day is that Gentiles are still separated from Jewish believers, and Cephas (Peter) should know better than this. But what we read in this passage is Paul’s own painful testimony, his persecution of the church, God’s revealing of Jesus to him, and his journey afterwards, and how people came to glorify God because of his story.

Luke 7:11-17 is a story of resurrection that echoes the story of the widow of Zarephath and her son. It also foreshadows Jesus’ own death and resurrection. When Jesus and the disciples arrive at a town called Nain, they find a funeral procession for a widow’s only son. Women were dependent upon their fathers, and later their husbands to provide for them, and lastly their sons should their husband die. This widow was destined to become poor if she had no one to provide for her—the resurrection of her son not only restores him to life but gives her renewed life as well.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its series on 2 Corinthians. Paul speaks about the work of God within us as treasure in clay jars—not something that the world necessarily sees, but is often veiled. This is because the world “blinds” them—the ways of this world, or the “god of this world” as Paul puts it makes it difficult to see the worth and value of living into God’s ways. The ways of this world, the idol of this world, is to worship wealth, worldly success, and notoriety. God’s ways are often not notorious, but subtle. God’s ways change how we see everything, but the world cannot perceive it. The believers have been persecuted and challenged and struck down, but everything is worth it because the same Jesus who rose from the dead will raise us up.

God is the one who gives us new life, an eternal life that begins now. We perceive the world differently, and through that lens, we also understand success differently. We see gains in losing and giving to others. We experience success in not accumulating wealth and power, but in lifting up the oppressed and seeking justice. We know value in the love and relationships of others rather than in having power over others. This is hard for the world to see, but it is how we are called to live into God’s ways.

Call to Worship:

Listen to the call of God:

 **God has made a new way in the wilderness for us into life.**

Feel the movement of the Holy Spirit:

 **The Spirit is leading us in the ways of justice and hope.**

Trust in the words of Jesus:

 **Christ is calling us into new life now, the promise of eternal life forever.**

Come, follow the wisdom of God’s ways;

 **For God know that the world will fail us, but God’s commandments endure forever.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of Healing, we have broken down again. We have broken our relationships against the values of this world that uphold worldly success, wealth and fame over relationships and trust. We have broken our hearts over empty desires and failed promises of security and satisfaction by listening to the voices of this world above the call of Christ. We have broken our faith with You by failing to follow Your commandments to love You with our whole being and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Forgive us. Call us back to Your ways, to listen to Your wisdom, to follow You in this world, now. In the name of Christ, the one who lived and died for us, that we might have the hope of resurrection, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Our God is the God of Restoration, the God of New Life, the God of Resurrection. Our God is the God of fresh starts, of new hope, of restored faith. Our God is the God of love, peace, justice and joy. God is with you every part of the way, calling for you to turn, to follow, and sometimes to lead. God is with you, offering forgiveness. God is within you, loving you exactly as you are. Go forth, and share the Good News. Amen.

Prayer

Holy One, help us to find the holy in our daily lives, as we get ready for work, or kids off to school, or think of all the things we need to do for the day—help us to find the holy in our daily lives. Help us to stop and be thankful and grateful. Call us into the ways of Your justice everyday, by thinking about where our food comes from or the clothes we wear, remembering the farmers and workers who have helped provide for our way of life. Help us to change our ways when our way of life causes harm for another. Show us Your paths of peace and help us to sow peace in our own homes and neighborhoods, our places of work and education. Help us to know the holy is always with us and around us, for You are always with us, around us, and within us, working all things towards Your Goodwill. In the name of Christ, in whose path we follow, we pray. Amen.