Worship Resources for June 7, 2015—Second Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 1 Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15 or Genesis 3:8-15; Psalm 130 or Psalm 138; 2 Corinthians 4:13-15:1; Mark 3:20-35

Narrative Lectionary: Psalm 113 (Praise)

For the first half of this season after Pentecost, we will be reading in the first Hebrew Scripture selection the stories of Saul, David and Solomon, the first kings of Israel. In this passage, the prophet Samuel laments that the people have demanded to have a king over them. God tells Samuel not to take it personally—the people are rejecting God as their king, not Samuel as the prophet of the Lord. God speaks through Samuel, warning the people what will happen if they have an earthly king—that the way an earthly king rules and has ownership and dominion is not the same as when God is reigning—but the people have made their choice, and Samuel anoints Saul as king.

The second selection from the Hebrew Scriptures contains the rejection by Adam and Eve of God’s dominion and sovereignty. They have hidden themselves from God because they are afraid, and ashamed of their nakedness. Perhaps the “sin” is not so much doing what God told them not to do, but being afraid to face God, afraid to show who they really were and hiding themselves among clothes and trees. But blame abounds, scapegoating persists, and instead of harmony there is discord.

Psalm 130 sings of God’s forgiveness and redemption. The psalmist knows that if God were to keep track of their transgressions, the psalmist would deserve judgment, but in God there is forgiveness, there is healing. God hears our prayers and knows our hearts. God is the one who redeems us all, who saves us and rescues us, even from our own transgressions.

Psalm 138 sings of God as the one who reigns, who is the God of gods, who is the one that the psalmist turns to. The psalmist knows that God will keep them safe and will rescue them from harm. Though other nations worship other gods, the psalmist chooses to worship this God, the Creator, the one who has delivered them and continues to fulfill the promises of old.

2 Corinthians 4:13-15:1 speaks of faith and encouragement even in difficult times, that what we see and experience now is only temporary—what we cannot see is eternal. Paul’s words bring encouragement to speak in boldness of faith because faith cannot be seen, cannot be explained—and is the one thing that can endure when the visible world is falling apart. We have faith that we will be raised in Christ, that we will dwell with God forever, even though we cannot see it.

Mark 3:20-35 is an early story of Jesus’ ministry when his own family tries to restrain him, to quiet him, to bring him home. They feel he has “gone out of his mind.” The religious leaders are calling Jesus all sorts of names, and his family feels it has gone far enough. They want to protect him, and they are worried about him, but they, like the religious leaders, cannot see the good that Jesus is doing. They do not see the people who have been healed, the oppressed who have been lifted up, the marginalized who have been brought in. Jesus scolds the religious leaders because if he was really possessed by a demon he would not be doing good and bringing healing and wholeness. And he scolds his family because if they could see who he really is, they would also see the people around him are now his family. And we know, through history and tradition and some of the Scriptures that Jesus’ mother and brothers did come around and see who he really was, and see who their family in God really was.

The Narrative Lectionary is focusing on the psalms, and Psalm 113 sings praises to God who is the creator, the King of kings—a King who lifts up the poor and oppressed and makes them to be kings, a King who raises up women who were disgraced in their culture and blesses them. This is the God the psalmist sings praises to, the God who does justice and lifts up those who have been downtrodden.

When we give ourselves over to God and God’s ways, we recognize that the universe is far greater than we imagine. It is easy to be caught up in the ways of this world and its rulers and laws, and to shrug our shoulders and say “that’s the way things are.” Our God breaks through and says it does not have to be this way. We are called to lift up the oppressed and bring in the marginalized. We are called to look beyond the bonds of blood and see our family in Christ as all around us in need. We are called to see beyond what we can see and experience now, knowing that God’s reign, God’s beloved community, is beyond what we can know and yet we are called to participate in it now.

Call to Worship

Our ways are not your ways,

**Turn our hearts to You, O God.**

We seek power to have control,

**May we remember that You are the Creator of All.**

We strive for the things that please us,

**Help us to do what You have called us to do:**

**To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with You.**

As we enter this time of worship,

**May we give over our desire for power and control,**

**Knowing that You gave Your life for us. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Creator of All, we confess that we seek power and control to make the world work for our needs, instead of seeking the needs of the world that You have created. Help us to let go of the ways of the world that fail us time and again, and to walk in Your ways that seek the well-being of all of Your creation. In the name of Christ, who emptied himself of all power, and is now risen, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

The ways of the world are misleading, but Christ is always helping us to turn back. When we go astray, led on by the corruptive sway of power or the temptations of greed, when we recognize where we have gone wrong, Christ is there. Turn away from the world, and walk in the ways of Christ, seeking to serve those in need, seeking the well-being of others before our own desires. Go and share the good news, and find fulfillment in God, who forgives and restores. Amen.

Prayer

Wondrous God, we know that You are the Creator of All. We know that You are the one who gives life and breath and meaning. We have created our own worlds within, in which we are the top of the food chain, the head of the group, the king of the world. May we be humbled gently to remember that we have been created in Your image, but You are the one who designed the universe and our earth. May we live into Your design and seek Your ways, so we might fulfill Your image in us. Amen.