Worship Resources for June 9th, 2019—Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:1-21 or Genesis 11:1-9; Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b; Romans 8:14-17 or Acts 2:1-21; John 14:8-17 (25-27)

Narrative Lectionary: Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4; Romans 8:14-39 (Matthew 28:16-20)

We begin the day of Pentecost with the story from Acts (also an alternative reading for the Epistle), on how the Holy Spirit descended upon the gathered disciples, with divided tongues like fire on each of their heads, how they spoke in the languages of all the Jews of the diaspora and the people could understand them. Peter boldly declares that the disciples are not drunk, as some have accused, but as the prophet Joel prophesied, the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon them.

An alternative to the Acts story of Pentecost is the story of the Tower of Babel, one of the creation stories in our Bible from the pre-history (time before Abraham) that explains why people scattered across the earth and spoke different languages. Similar to the story of creation in Genesis 1, God speaks in the plural, and seeing how the people want to be one and have one language, God chooses to scatter them across the face of the earth.

The psalmist sings of God’s wonderful works of creation in Psalm 104:24-34, 35b, noting how the earth is full of God’s creatures, including the sea, and the great sea monster of myth, Leviathan. All of creation looks to God for their needs in due season, and all of creation returns to dust. The psalmist declares they will sing and give praise to God with their whole life and being, for God is the God who makes all living creatures.

Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as a spirit of adoption in Romans 8:14-17, that it is the Spirit within us that bears witness that we are children of God. We become joint heirs with Christ because of the Spirit, but also because we suffer with Christ, and are glorified with Christ.

In the beginning of Jesus’ final discourse with his disciples, Philip questions him, wanting to see the Father in order to be satisfied. Jesus declares that he is in the Father and the Father is in him, and that those who love him will keep his commandments. The Spirit of Truth abides in those who believe. In additional verses, Jesus declares that he has said these things now, while he is still with them, but the Holy Spirit, the Advocate that is coming, will teach them everything. Jesus gives not as the world gives, but gives the gift of the Holy Spirit and his peace.

The Narrative Lectionary also focuses on Pentecost, but just the first four verses of Acts chapter 2, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the divided tongues, and that the disciples now had the ability to speak to other believers in their own languages.

The Narrative Lectionary continues with a reading from Romans 8:14-39. This is the crux of Paul’s argument, that all of creation has been waiting for this revelation of the children of God, that all can become children of God through adoption by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit intercedes for us and knows our hearts, and nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus, for all of us can now be children of God because of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us confirms our adoption.

Matthew 28:16-20 contains the Great Commission, Jesus’ final words to the disciples in Matthew’s Gospel account. While some of the disciples still had doubts, Jesus called them all, telling them to go make disciples of all nations, and to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to teach them everything Christ has commanded them. Jesus reminds them that he is with them always.

Pentecost is the culmination of the work of God through creation, and now into the body of Christ. What once was scattered at Babel is now brought together. What caused confusion is now clear. What separated us is now brought together. We are no longer Jew and Gentile, we are one through Christ Jesus, and we know this oneness through the work of the Holy Spirit that confirms who we are: children of God, the body of Christ.

Call to Worship (from 1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

Now there are different spiritual gifts;

**They all come from the same Spirit.**

There are a number of ways to serve;

**We all serve the same God.**

There are different ways to participate;

**The same God inspires each of us.**

The Holy Spirit works in each of us for the common good.

**Come, Holy Spirit. Inspire us, guide us, and lead us.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy Spirit, we confess that we do not always seek You. We desire to confirm character by someone’s noticeable accomplishments, rather than perceiving how You are at work in them. We desire to do things our own way, and put our gifts above the gifts of others, forgetting that all spiritual gifts come from You and are designed to work together. We desire worldly things, such as notoriety and wealth, rather than the spiritual gifts of love and compassion. Forgive us for our selfish, worldly ways. Remind us that we are children of You, children who belong to Your reign, Your beloved community. Help us to shed the ways of the world, and embrace You as our Spirit, Guide, Guardian, and Friend, and to embrace one another as siblings of the Spirit. Holy Spirit, move through us, breathe in us, and lead us onward. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

The Spirit has been poured out on us to bring good news. The Spirit is at work in all good things. The Spirit is within you. Love one another. Forgive one another. Work for justice together. Seek peace together. Practice mercy together. And the peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding will be with you. Amen.

Prayer

Spirit of Life, You moved over the dark, dark deep, and called forth light. You moved over the formless void and created a world. You breathed into the soil of the earth and caused us to breathe life. You are within us, with us and around us, always. With every breath, we give thanks. With every breath, we know life. With every breath, we know we will return to You. Spirit of Life, You are breathing something new into this world now. Spirit of Truth, You are breathing Your wisdom into us now. Spirit of Hope, You are leading us forward, and we know You are at work in the body of Christ. Spirit of Life, move us, again and again. Amen.