Worship Resources for July 1, 2018—Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27 and Psalm 130; Lamentations 3:22-30 and Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

Narrative Lectionary: Series on 1 John, 1 John 1:5-2:2 (John 1:29)

Our first thread in the Hebrew Scriptures continues to follow the rise of the Kings of Israel. At the beginning of Second Samuel, David laments the death of Saul and Jonathan, and orders a song of lament sung in memory and honor of Saul and Jonathan. David speaks of how important Jonathan was to him, that he loved him more than he loved women. He laments how the mighty have fallen, and how brave they were. Despite all the times that Saul tried to have him killed, David unites the country in their mourning and grief.

Psalm 130 is a prayerful plea to God for deliverance. Knowing that if God held everyone’s wrongdoings against them, the psalmist argues that no one could stand before God. Instead, the psalmist declares there is forgiveness in God, there is hope, and the power of redemption.

In the midst of Lamentations, the writer finds hope in God in 3:22-30. The writer speaks of God’s faithfulness and steadfast love that never ends and is renewed. The writer declares that it is good to sit in silence, to accept that they have gone wrong, to suffer the consequences—but God will redeem them. God has compassion, and will bring relief and healing.

Psalm 30 is a song of praise, for God has brought healing and restoration. God delivered the singer from danger and despair, and the psalmist calls upon the faithful to sing praise to God. Even though there is anger and grief, joy will come. God is the one who will turn mourning into dancing, and will bring renewed hope and joy.

The writer (presumably Paul) of 2 Corinthians 8:7-15 calls upon the church in Corinth to be generous. The church in Jerusalem was in great need, and the members in Corinth had more resources. In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul had called the church out on their inequal way of sharing the Lord’s Supper, where the hungry remained hungry and the rich feasted. Here, in a more gentle tone, Paul calls upon them to share out of their abundance, that there is a need for a fair balance. The church in Jerusalem of mostly Jewish Christians had a number of members in poverty. The church in Corinth seems eager to give, but has not fulfilled this gift yet, so Paul reminds them to match their eagerness by giving.

The Gospel of Mark sometimes contains stories within stories—a few weeks ago, it did this with Mark 3:20-35. In today’s passage, after Jesus and his disciples get out of the boat (in last week’s passage, they had left the crowds behind and got into the boat), they find another crowd gathering. One of the leaders of the synagogue comes to find Jesus, for his daughter is gravely ill. But while traveling to her, the crowds press in on him, and our story-within-a-story is of a woman who has suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years. She reaches out to touch the hem of his cloak, for she believes if only she can do that, she will be healed. Immediately, she feels she has been healed of her disease, and Jesus stops, saying “who touched me?” His disciples think the question ridiculous, but the woman comes forward, trembling. But Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well, and to go in peace. Returning to the outer story, some messengers come from the synagogue leader’s house to tell him his daughter is dead and to not bother Jesus any longer. But Jesus tells the leader, “Do not fear, only believe.” And though the others do not believe him, Jesus declares she is not dead, but only sleeping, takes her by the hand, tells her to get up, and immediately she gets up and walks around. And then, in a tender moment, Jesus tells them not to tell anyone what happened, but to give the girl something to eat. He is more concerned about her needs than anything else in that moment.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its series on 1 John, this week with 1:5-2:2. The writer begins by declaring that all people sin, and that we must accept that we sin. If we say we do not, we are lying to ourselves. The writer’s purpose is to help keep the listener from sin, but also helping them to know that Jesus is our advocate before God, who takes on the sins of the world. In a time where the church was facing deep division, and some leaders in the community were among the Gnostics, the writer of 1 John wanted to emphasize that sin is forgiven and removed by Christ, who was both fully human and fully divine.

John 1:29 is where John the Baptist declares that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In the Johannine community, the belief that Jesus’ death was the atoning sacrifice for sin was prevalent. Only Jesus’ death could bring this about.

Fear leads to doubt. Hope leads to faith. In fear, the leaders thought the little girl was dead. In fear of not arriving on time, the disciples thought it ridiculous that Jesus worried about who touched him. In fear, we want to avoid the truth. But in hope, we take the girl’s hand and she rises, and we concern ourselves with her needs. In hope, the woman who has suffered for twelve years knows she will be made well. In hope, we sit in silence with our lamentations and brokenness and yet know that God will see us through. In hope, we confess that we still have sin, but that we trust in God’s love through Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us. In hope, we shed our fear, and have faith.

Call to Worship

The world is troubled and distressed,

**Help us to reach out in faith, O God.**

We hear the literal cries of injustice, the weeping of children;

**Help us to move when fear immobilizes us, O God.**

The news causes us to despair, to feel helpless to do anything;

**Help us to trust and hope in You, O God.**

Holy Spirit, draw us in, fill us, and renew our faith in this time of worship;

**Holy Spirit, send us full of Your light, love, hope, and courage. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we have allowed fear to keep us from speaking up for justice. We have allowed fear to hold us back from doing the right thing. We have allowed fear to keep a simple, false peace to avoid conflict. But most of all, we have allowed fear to keep us from loving our neighbors as ourselves, which is the commandment You gave us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. We have failed to love as You have loved us. We have failed to view all of Your children as our siblings in Christ. Call us to the act of repentance. Help us to seek reconciliation. Call us to shed our fear that manifests itself in cruelty and hate. Help us to cling to hope and love, to live out our faith. May we repent of the horrors that have been inflicted in our name. Call us into the work of justice, freedom for the oppressed, liberty for the imprisoned. In the name of Christ, who taught us that to love You is to love one another, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance (from Lamentations 3:23)

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; God’s mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is God’s faithfulness. God’s steadfast love endures forever, and there is nothing we can do that will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. You are forgiven. You are restored. Now go: do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God. Amen.

Prayer

Creator God, You made each of us in Your image. You made us of such variety that we have different skin tones, sizes and shapes, different languages and customs and cultures, genders and orientations and deep, personal ways of understanding who we are. From the very beginning, You taught us different names for You, names that Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Hagar, and Ishmael all learned to call upon. You gave a new name for Yourself to Moses, and You gave the familiar “Abba” as a name through Jesus. We are all Your children, and we call upon You to bring us and bind us together again. We call upon You to remind us that we are all Your children. We call upon You to remind us that to love our neighbor as ourselves means making sure our neighbor is cared for, fed, that their children are safe, and that they are safe. We are reminded that You, Creator God, made this world, and the borders You assigned were for the oceans, not for the people. The limits You gave were for the waves, not skin colors or languages or cultures. You called us to become one, and in You we pray for unity, reconciliation, justice, and peace. Amen.