Worship Resources for July 10, 2016—Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Amos 7:7-17 or Deuteronomy 30:9-14; Psalm 25:1-10 or Psalm 82; Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37

Narrative Lectionary: Job 3:1-10; 4:1-9; 7:11-21

The first selection in the Hebrew Scriptures has been following the prophets, from Elijah to Elisha, in this season after Pentecost. Now, we turn to the prophet Amos, a shepherd and arborist turned prophet who tells the leaders in Israel that God has set a plumb line. God has set a line and had enough. The people will go into exile because of their political dealings and their unfaithfulness to God and God’s ways. The priests don’t like hearing the words of Amos, and the priest Amaziah tells Amos to go away, telling the king that Amos is conspiring against him, but Amos declares that the priests have sealed their fate by telling Amos not to prophesy, for it is God that has called him to do so.

Deuteronomy 30:9-14 declares that the word is very near the people, when they follow God’s ways. The commandment of God is to observe the commandments and laws that God has given the people, who were once enslaved. They are a new people, with no king but God, and this is what God has given them—and the word, like God, is very near them.

Psalm 25:1-10 is a song of faithfulness. The psalmist begins by seeking God’s truth and guidance, and calls for God to remember them in steadfast love, not their previous mistakes. God is the one who teaches us, and if we follow God’s ways, we follow the way of love and faithfulness.

Psalm 82 paints a picture of a divine council, with other gods (usually the gods of each nation), but God is the judge of all. God is the defender of the orphan, the widow, and the poor. God is the one who grants justice to the oppressed. God is the one who judges all the peoples, all the nations, for all nations fall under God.

In the season after Pentecost we began with Galatians as the epistle reading, and now we move into Colossians. The introduction to this letter begins with Paul giving thanks for the faithfulness of the Colossians because they have learned from those sent by Paul and the others and have continued to grow in faithfulness to Christ. Paul encourages them to grow in strength and endurance, and Paul and the others continue to pray for the church in Colossae to be filled with God’s wisdom and knowledge.

Luke 10:25-37 is the parable of the Good Samaritan. In Luke’s account, Jesus is not asked which is the greatest commandment, but a lawyer asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. When Jesus asks the lawyer what is in the law, the lawyer answers with the commandment to love God and to love one’s neighbor as one’s self—but then asks Jesus the question, “who is my neighbor?” And Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan—the one who showed mercy to the man in need. Samaritans were despised by the Jews that Jesus knew, and to have a Samaritan be the one who shows mercy would be a scandalous story.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its study of Job with these selections from chapters 3, 4, and 7. Job cries out in anguish to God, because he knows he is innocent. One of Job’s friends, Eliphaz, is convinced Job must have done something, because no one is innocent. Job does not understand why God does not leave him alone, and let him be. Job wonders if he has done something wrong, why God doesn’t forgive him? Job is in that deepest valley, that darkest night, when it is hard to see the goodness of God, and Eliphaz has not made Job’s questions any easier.

Job does not understand why God does not answer, and why God has allowed this to happen. The lawyer in Luke 10 knows what he must do, but doesn’t want to do it, and really does not want to hear that the worst of worse persons, in his mind, is the good neighbor, the one who showed mercy. We don’t want to hear what makes us uncomfortable, what disturbs us, what challenges us to turn away from the ways of the world, like the plumb line that Amos declares God has set. But the word of God is very near us, and we know what God has called us to do. We know that God is with us, and has called us to show mercy and to love our neighbors, but this can be the hardest thing for us to do.

Call to Worship

Christ has shown us the way to eternal life;

 **Christ is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.**

Christ calls us to love God with all our being, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

 **Christ is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.**

Christ proclaims that we are neighbors to one another when we show mercy.

 **Christ is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.**

In this time of worship, love God, and love your neighbor as yourselves.

 **We worship God, who has shown us the Way, who is the Truth, and leads us to Life.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Merciful God, You have shown us mercy time and again because we have failed to live up to the law of love. But we have not always shown the same mercy to others. We expect forgiveness without extending forgiveness to others. We demand unconditional love while placing conditions on others. Forgive us because we do not deserve it. Call us into Your ways of justice and mercy because the world needs it. Love us because without it, we are nothing. In the name of Christ, who went to the cross, through death and life for us, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon (from Lamentations 3:22-23)

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 mercy endures forever. God’s forgiveness endures forever. God’s love endures forever. There is no limit to God’s faithfulness. Go, and show mercy. Go, and forgive. Go, and love. Serve God in these ways. Amen.

Prayer

Architect of the Universe, You have designed our world to produce life abundantly. Call us into caring for Your world that You designed. You have set limits for our atmosphere, limits for our water, limits for our very soil, but we have crossed those lines and dismissed those boundaries. We have disregarded the lines You drew and have made the world fit our use and desire. God, we have truly made a mess of things. Help us. Call us back into caring for the world You so carefully crafted for us, and for all creatures. Call us back into the stewardship that You designed us to participate in. Help us to restore what You intended, for our world and for us. In Your name we pray. Amen.