Worship Resources for July 14th—Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

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

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Hebrews, 1:1-4 (John 1:1-5)

The prophet Amos speaks God’s judgment upon Israel in Amos 7:7-17. In the verses prior to these, God shows Amos two visions of judgment, of locusts and fire, and Amos cries out that they are too much for Jacob, for the people of Israel. However, this third vision of judgment, of a plumb line set in the midst of the people, shows that the division sown between God’s desires and what the people want has been set. They have worshiped other gods, and God has determined that those who have opposed God will fall. The priest Amaziah argues against Amos’ prophecy, telling him he has no right to prophecy to the king, but Amos reminds Amaziah that he is not a prophet for the king, but rather a herdsman, a dresser of sycamore trees that God called to prophesy. Because the king, Amaziah, and others will not listen, Amos declares judgment: they will go into exile.

The psalmist envisions God as the judger of other gods, sitting on the judge’s bench in the divine council in Psalm 82. God chastises others for injustice and for showing favoritism to the wicked. Instead, God, demands justice for the weak and the orphan, the needy and the lowly. All nations belong to God, and their gods will fail and fall, for God is the Most High.

Our second selection for the Hebrew Scriptures is Deuteronomy 30:9-14. God takes delight with those who turn to God with their whole heart and soul, and they will find abundance in the fruit of their work and in their lives. The commandment of God is not difficult to know, for the word is already with the faithful, on their lips and in their heart.

The psalmist seeks deliverance in God in Psalm 25:1-10. They call out to God to seek God’s ways and to be led in God’s truth and salvation. The psalmist pleads with God not to remember their past wrongdoings, but instead to be instructed in God’s ways, for God is faithful.

The letter to the Colossians begins with words of hope. The writer (most scholars do not believe it was Paul) speaks of the hope in the word of truth. The writer extends a blessing that the receivers of this letter would be made strong in Christ and prepared to endure everything in patience, and that they would bear spiritual fruit. God has rescued them from the power of darkness, and now they belong to the kingdom of the Son, in whom they “have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (vs. 14).

Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Jesus is tested by a lawyer as to what he must do to inherit eternal life, and when the lawyer responds with the Shema (that God is one, and we are called to love God with all one’s being) and loving one’s neighbor as one’s self, the lawyer asks a further question: who is my neighbor? Jesus tells this parable, using the example of the Samaritan—someone they would have despised—as a way to shock them and to twist the story. For a detailed explanation of how this story is seen within a Jewish context, see Amy-Jill Levine’s work *Short Stories by Jesus*. The neighbor is whoever shows the one in need mercy—even if it’s someone we despise.

The Narrative Lectionary begins a five part series on Hebrews, beginning with 1:1-4. Like the gospel of John, the writer of Hebrews places Christ at the beginning of creation, heir of all things, and God has spoken through the Son. The writer establishes Christ as the one who purifies us from our sins, setting up the argument made later in the letter of Christ being the high priest and the sacrifice in one. Christ is seated at the right hand of God, the reflection of God’s glory, the inheritor of God’s name.

In a similar way, the Gospel of John establishes Christ at the beginning of the creation of the world. All things came into being through Christ; without him nothing came into being, and Christ is the light of the world.

The call of God to live out the commandments is a call to a deeper way of life. It’s a call to incline our hearts toward God, to live in a way that the teachings of scripture are lived out in all we say and do. God calls us as we are, from where we are, such as Amos, a herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees. God challenges us when we are set in our ways, such as the lawyer determined to test Jesus, who finds that the question to inherit eternal life isn’t about inheritance at all, but rather how he practices mercy to others. The call of God is to find our identity in Christ, and in our love for others.

Call to Worship

God calls us as we are, for God made us;

 **God leads us into the way of truth and righteousness.**

Christ calls us where we are, to do what we are made to do;

 **Christ calls us to follow, to love our neighbor as ourselves.**

The Spirit calls us to use our God-given gifts;

 **The Spirit moves us to practice kindness and compassion.**

Come, for God is calling you.

 **Enter this time of worship, to be called, to be sent, and to serve. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God Who Calls, we confess we are not often paying attention. We are caught up in our own worries and concerns. We know Your voice, but the voices of the world overwhelm us. Guide us to perceive Your still, small voice, that reminds us of who we are, as Your beloved children. Help us listen for Your voice that reminds us that what is required is to do justice, love mercy, and live humbly with You. Keep us to the knowledge that Your voice is always calling us back, to repentance, forgiveness, and love. God Who Calls, we are Your sheep, and we know the Shepherd’s voice. Help us to follow always. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

There is no place we can go where the voice of God will not call us. There is no place we can hide where the voice of God will not find us. There is nothing that can stop God from calling us, for God knows the language of our heart, and continues to whisper our name. You are God’s beloved child. Turn, and know God is with you. Turn, and follow where Christ leads you. Turn, and feel the Spirit move you. Amen.

Prayer

Ancient of Days, our beginnings and endings are with You, the Alpha and Omega. You created all things and shined Your light into the universe. In us, You breathed life and love and Spirit. You move in us, work through us, and call us by name into this ancient, holy work of creation. Guide us in our co-creativity, so that our work and play are always for good. Lead us away from evil that destroys and consumes without reparations. For You are the Source of our being, the Light of all light, the Love Eternal. Amen.