Worship Resources for July 17, 2016—Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Amos 8:1-12 or Genesis 18:1-10a; Psalm 15 or Psalm 52; Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42

Narrative Lectionary: Job 14:7-15; 19:23-27

The prophet Amos beholds a vision from God of the end of prosperous times for Israel. The basket of summer fruit symbolizes the end of the summer harvest, the end of their prosperity, because the wealthy elite have looked to their own lavish desires instead of the needs of the poor around them. They have celebrated themselves when they should have mourned their turning away from God’s people and God’s ways. Amos speaks of a day when they will long for the words of God the way one longs for food or water during a famine, because they have turned away from God.

Genesis 18:1-10a is the story of God’s visit to Abraham and Sarah in the form of three visitors. Abraham and Sarah show the three strangers hospitality, and in turn, they promise that Sarah will conceive and have a son. Abraham persuades the strangers, who were passing by, to come and stay, and this act of persuasive hospitality is rewarded not only by Sarah eventually having a child, but by God’s covenant to always be their God.

Psalm 15 asks who may dwell with God? The psalmist answers that those who do what is right and speak the truth from their heart. Those who do what is right also do what is right by the disenfranchised and the marginalized, and do not oppress those who are poor.

Psalm 52 speaks against those that do evil, especially against the poor. Those who trust in their wealth will fail. Those who lie, plot, and scheme to get ahead will fall. Instead, those who trust in God’s steadfast love will endure.

We continue in the letter to the Colossians with the declaration from the writer that all things have been created through Christ, and for Christ. Christ is the firstborn of all creation. Through Christ, all things have been reconciled to God. The writer declares to the readers and listeners that even they have been reconciled to God through Christ’s death on the cross. And now, the mystery is being made known to the Gentiles, and through Paul’s suffering, the word of God is becoming known to the Gentiles and to the early church.

Luke 10:38-42 tells the story of Mary and Martha, who are also mentioned in John’s Gospel (there, they have a brother named Lazarus). While in simple form, we see Martha as the one worried and busy and fretting about getting everything right, and Mary the one who sits at Jesus’ fit and listens to him. Stepping back, we might recognize ourselves in both Mary and Martha.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its journey through the book of Job with selections from chapters 14 and 19. Job questions what happens when mortals die—do we finally meet God, or are our questions still unanswered? In chapter 19, Job declares that he knows that his “Redeemer” lives, that he knows he will see God after he dies. Job struggles with his suffering now, but declares that he knows he will see God face to face in the end.

What do we do with this life we are given? Do we live for others, look to the well-being of others, or do we live so we can have security and satisfaction? All too often the world tells us that God has blessed us when we have enough to our own satisfaction and enjoyment; but the Scripture tells us time and again that we must look to the well-being of others. This was the mistake of the wealthy leaders of Amos’ day—when they turned away from the poor, they turned away from God. Paul reminds us that Christ’s death reconciles all of us to God—and in that reconciliation, we are called to look to the well-being of others.

Call to Worship (from Colossians 1:15-20)

Christ is the image of the invisible God;

**Christ is the firstborn of all creation.**

Christ himself is before all things;

**In Christ, all things are held together.**

Christ is the head of the body, the church;

**Christ is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.**

In Christ, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell;

**God has reconciled all things in earth and heaven through Christ.**

Let us worship Christ our Lord, who gave himself up on the cross for us.

**Let us follow Christ in our hearts and in this time of worship.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

God of the Lost, of the Lonely, of the Lesser-known: we confess that we often look to You as our God alone, and ignore that You are the God of our neighbors. You are the God of those in need. You are the God of the suffering. You are the God of the innocent. You are the God of the stranger, the houseless, the child in need, the marginalized youth. You hear their cries as the psalmists tell us over and over again. Open us to see how great You are, O God, and how You have called us to seek out those who have been forgotten and pushed to the edge, to meet their needs and to put them before ourselves. Call us into Your ways of justice and mercy. In the name of Christ, who was scorned, marginalized, oppressed and forgotten, abandoned to the cross, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

The Mystery of the Ages has been revealed to us through the love of Jesus Christ. Christ has conquered death and sin forever, and in Christ we have new life, eternal life. Your sins are forgiven. You are called forth into the ministry of Christ, to love and serve all people, especially those who have been left out, those who have been forgotten, those who are in need. Go, serve, and love, in the name of Christ. Amen.

Prayer

God who calls upon the children to enter Your reign, take us up into Your arms, into Your welcome and embrace. Remind us to be like children, to love unconditionally, to see the world with eyes of wonder, and to have a heart that breaks easily when it knows the pain of others. Teach us to learn like children to care for our planet, to clean up after ourselves, to do our part. Call upon us to remember to play, to include others, and to enjoy this life that You have given us, and make it enjoyable for others. In the name of Christ, who said “let the little children come unto me,” we pray, because it is to them that Your reign belongs. Amen.