Worship Resources for July 21st, 2019—Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

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

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Hebrews, 2:10-18 (Matthew 12:46-50)

The first selection of the Hebrew scriptures continues in Amos, as the dresser of sycamore trees beholds a vision of a basket of summer fruit. While things seem to be going well and the harvest is ripe, disaster is coming. Judgment is declared against those who would cheat the poor and ignore those in need, those who would rather rush past the practices and rituals of worship of God so they can do what they want and gain wealth. Feasts will be turned into mourning, songs into lamentation. There will be a famine, but not of food—there will be people longing for the word of hope that comes from God, for there will not be hope as the leaders turn from God’s ways.

Psalm 52 begins with words against a mighty enemy, but the psalmist knows that God is the one who is faithful. The enemy trusts in their wealth, but the righteous trust in God. The psalmist declares they will proclaim God’s name among the faithful, for they trust in God’s steadfast love.

In the second selection from the Hebrew scriptures, three strangers visit Abraham, and he persuades them to stay in Genesis 18. He offers to bring them water and bread, and while Sarah makes cakes, Abraham kills a calf and prepares milk and curds for the three strangers. The three guests inquire about Sarah, and then tell Abraham they will return in due season, when she bears a son.

The short song of Psalm 15 asks the question of who may dwell with God. The response is those who do what is right, speak from the heart, and are honest and true. The faithful are the ones whose lives are in alignment with God, and the way they treat others is the reflection of their love and trust in God. Those who stay true to their words and actions have a strong foundation.

The Epistle reading continues in the first chapter of Colossians, declaring that Christ is the image of God, the firstborn of the dead, the head of the church. Christ has reconciled all to God through his death on the cross. The writer (presuming to be Paul) proclaims Christ, and the hope promised by the gospel they received, that what was hidden in mystery that has now been revealed.

The sisters Mary and Martha receive Jesus as a visitor in Luke 10:38-42. While Martha seems to be the one distracted by the tasks of the world, Jesus tells her that Mary has chosen the better part, to listen to Jesus. Martha was the one who welcomed Jesus into her home, and yet Mary seems to be acting like a guest. Jesus reminds Martha there is only need of one thing, instead of the many things she is distracted by. (For an interesting juxtaposition, see Mary and Martha in John 11, after Lazarus has died—Martha is the one who first comes to him and says she believes, but Mary stays and Jesus has to come to her).

The Narrative Lectionary continues its series on Hebrews with 2:10-18. Jesus, as the Son, sanctifies all, and calls us brothers and sisters, for we are all the children of God. Jesus shares in death so that death might be destroyed, and Jesus frees us from the fear of death. Jesus came for human beings and not for angels, because Jesus is our brother. He is the high priest who made the ultimate sacrifice and is able to help those being tested because he himself was tested.

When Jesus was told his mother and his brothers wanted to speak to him in Matthew 12:46-50, Jesus asked in response, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” He then turned to his disciples and said, “here are my mother and my brothers.” All who do the will of God are the siblings and family of Christ.

Amos speaks of a famine, not of food, but of the word of God, that people will long for God, will long for meaning. Perhaps in some ways, in parts of the world we are experiencing a longing for meaning, for understanding, a famine of knowing God and knowing who we are. Jesus teaches us that when we follow God’s ways for us, when we do the will of God, we are each other’s siblings, each other’s family. The distractions of the world make us forget that God is with us, now, either as an invited guest, or an unexpected stranger—God is in our midst. We are called to listen, to be reconciled, and to have hope.

Call to Worship

We gather together to seek comfort and peace,

 **God is present with us, now and always.**

We gather together for inspiration and guidance,

 **The Spirit moves in us, now and always.**

We gather together for encouragement and uplift,

 **Jesus leads us together, now and always.**

We gather in this space, knowing that God is with us in all places,

 **We come together to worship our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, now and always. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Ancient of Days, we confess that at times our worries and concerns are trivial. We are distracted by the cares of the world we have created, rather than the concerns of the needs around us. You taught us through Jesus Christ that to become first, we must become last of all and servant of all. When the world we have created for ourselves distracts us with its imperfections and disappointments, call us to the needs of the greater world around us. Open our hearts to the needs of our neighbors, and how we might best serve one another and You. In meeting the needs of those around us, we find that You are with us, working alongside us. Encourage us to see past our own daily inconveniences to meet the struggles of our neighbors in need. In the name of Christ, who lived by example, and calls us to live into The Way, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God knows the concerns in your heart, the hairs on your head, the wrinkles that have formed from worry. God knows at times even the little things matter greatly. God is with you. Be present with God, and know God’s love enfolds you. Be present with God, and know that God carries your burdens. Be present with God, and know God’s forgiveness, mercy and peace are with you, now and always. Amen.

Prayer

God of all Seasons, as things wax and wane, ebb and flow, call us to be present in the rhythm of life, to be mindful of our own seasons. We struggle as a people with anxiety, despair, and restlessness. Help us to find the rhythm that beats in our hearts, to rest and sleep, to rise and work, to contemplate Your presence among us, and to seek Your way in this world. Help us to find the right rhythm to practice justice and mercy while caring for our whole being. Help us to become in tune with You, and to know our own seasons of overwork and tiredness, so that we might be gentle with ourselves, and allow Your love and assurance to envelope us in those trying times. In all seasons, may we know Your presence. Amen.