Worship Resources for July 3, 2016—Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Independence Day Weekend (US) and Canada Day Weekend

Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Kings 5:1-14 or Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 30 or Psalm 66:1-9; Galatians 6:1-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Narrative Lectionary: Job 1:1-12

We begin our first selection from the Hebrew Scriptures with the story of Naaman, a great warrior of Aram who suffered from leprosy. A slave captured from Israel tells Naaman’s wife that there is a prophet in Samaria from God, a prophet who could heal Naaman. Elisha, the prophet, tells the king of Israel to let Naaman come to him, but Elisha tells Naaman to go wash in the Jordan seven times. This seems ridiculous to Naaman, who seems to think there should be some elaborate healing ritual, rather than something so simple. The Jordan River is not that grand of a river, and Naaman is upset—but his servants convince him that if it is so simple, why doesn’t he just do it? He does—and he finds himself healed of his leprosy.

God comes to the people of Israel, returning from exile, as a nursing, comforting mother in Isaiah 66. The prophet Isaiah uses the image of mother for God several times, but we often lose sight of this image. Just like Mom kissing our boo-boos, God is going to help the people see the goodness through the difficult times of the return from exile. As they see the destruction Jerusalem experienced, they will also see God’s faithfulness.

Psalm 30 sings praise to God who hears the cries of the oppressed and delivers them. The psalmist sings of their struggles and how God has seen them through, and encourages the people to sing praise to God and give thanks, because sorrow is momentary, but joy is everlasting with God.

Psalm 66:1-9 sings praise to God, reminding the people of how God led them across the sea to dry land in the Exodus. All the earth is called to praise God, to sing God’s praises, for God is the one who sees us through.

We end the series on Galatians this week and Paul’s address of the great controversy of his day, the welcoming and acceptance of Gentile Christians without the restrictions of the law and traditions. Paul completes his argument in talking about circumcision, which the Jewish Christian leaders were requiring of all people, while not requiring the rest of the law. Paul argues they were picking and choosing, rather than being led by the Spirit, and looking to Christ as a new creation, and that they have all been made new in Christ—there is no need for circumcision, for all now belong to Christ Jesus and are marked by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 tells of the time Jesus sent out not only the twelve Disciples, but seventy others, to go and proclaim the Good News. These seventy were called to rely on the hospitality of those around them, to go where they were welcomed, and that they were to accept the food given to them. They declared that the kingdom of God had drawn near, and they were able to perform great and miraculous signs among the people. Those who rejected the seventy rejected Jesus, and those who welcomed them welcomed Jesus. The seventy even found that demons submitted to them, but Jesus told them not to rejoice in this, but that their names were written in heaven—in other words, they were bringing the Kingdom to the people, and the Kingdom had drawn near, and they were part of it.

The Narrative Lectionary begins a six-week study of Job, and this Sunday, we read the first chapter. Job is a folk-story, told without a mark in time or a land that is recognizable. Rather, this is a story of the questions we ask of God when bad things happen and God seems to be silent. In the first chapter, we are introduced to Satan, who appears at this point in our Biblical narrative to have the role of divine prosecutor. He is the one determined to prove God right, by any means necessary, including getting God to allow bad things to happen to Job to prove that even the most righteous man will curse God. So Job is stricken in the first chapter—his crops, servants, and children are taken from him, destroyed and killed. Job mourns publicly, but does not curse God.

The themes of welcome and hospitality ring for those celebrating national holidays, for our nations of Canada and the United States are nations of immigrants and indigenous peoples. We are reminded that we have not always welcomed the stranger, and worse—we have often worked to destroy and annihilate the first peoples that have lived in this land. And while we are new creations in Christ, the work for justice continues to spur us on, including the work for reparations and restoration.

Call to Worship

The whole law is summed up in a single commandment,

 **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”**

Live by the Spirit;

 **For we are led by the Spirit into the world.**

We belong to Jesus;

 **We do not belong to this world.**

Let us love and serve one another, as led by the Spirit;

 **May we worship God, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the love of Jesus Christ.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Sovereign God, we confess our sins of oppression and domination, of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction. We confess that even when we have tried to correct our wrongs, we have still assumed the air of superiority, and have belittled those we have wronged. Forgive us and call us into the hard work of justice. Call us to give up our own stake in the matter and instead work for Your justice that lifts up the oppressed and brings in the marginalized. In the name of Christ, who went to the cross for all, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

In the love of God, we belong to one another. We need one another; we are part of one another. In the love of God, we are part of God’s beloved community. We forgive as we have been forgiven. We are filled with the Spirit, and set on right paths. Go, and share the Good News of God’s beloved community, and dwell in the love of God. Amen.

Prayer

Almighty God, You are Sovereign of all. You created the world without national borders. You created us as one people on one planet. But we have divided and fractured, scattered and marginalized. Draw us together by the one Spirit. Draw us together in Your One Love. Draw us together, so that we might understand that Your love knows no bounds. For we are all part of Your beloved community; we all belong to You. In the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, we pray. Amen.