Worship Resources for July 5, 2015—Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, Independence Day Weekend (US)

Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10 or Ezekiel 2:1-5; Psalm 48 or Psalm 123; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

Narrative Lectionary: Psalm 146 (Praise)

Our first thread in the Hebrew Scriptures is following the rise of the Kings, of Saul, David and Solomon. In this passage, David, who was already anointed by the prophet Samuel to be king, is now recognized by all the tribes of Israel and is anointed king over a united people, a united country. He first reigned in Hebron, but later reigned in Jerusalem, and the city became known as the City of David, the heart of Israel and later the heart of Israel’s worshipping of God.

The passage from Ezekiel is the call of the prophet Ezekiel by God to speak to Israel, who has rebelled against and rejected God. God’s spirit has entered Ezekiel to speak to the people, and it doesn’t matter whether the people believe him or not, he has been called, and empowered by God to speak the truth to the people.

Psalm 48 sings praise to God who sits on the throne in the city of David, on Mt. Zion. In this psalm, God is clearly seen as the God of Israel, as opposed to the gods of other lands. The kings of other nations tremble before God, the God of Israel. God will be their God for eternity, and Jerusalem, Zion, will be where he reigns.

Psalm 123 pleads with God who is enthroned in the heavens, and the psalmist calls upon God for deliverance and mercy. The psalmist and the congregation have suffered and they plead for God to intervene.

2 Corinthians 12:2-10 is a strange passage, in which Paul tells of someone he knows who “was caught up to the third heaven.” It sounds very strange, and it is. Paul doesn’t even know how to describe it, but Paul tells that story as a witness that there is more than what we can see and experience. Paul also talks about his own struggles and a “thorn” in his side, a temptation that was hard for him to bear, but he prayed to God, knowing that God’s grace would see him through, and writes this to the church in Corinth to encourage them through their trials and difficulties.

Mark 6:1-13 has two parts: the first is Jesus returning home, and not being welcomed in his home synagogue. The people gathered scoff at him, because they knew him when he was a child. Because of their lack of hospitality and belief, Jesus is not able to do much in his hometown. The second part is that afterwards, Jesus goes around to the other villages teaching and sends the disciples out two by two. In this case, the disciples are called to depend upon the hospitality of those they visit. They are not to take anything with them, but to accept the hospitality of those they come to, and if it is not offered, to shake the dust off of their sandals and move on.

The Narrative Lectionary ends its series on the Psalms with Psalm 146, going back to the theme of Praise. The psalmist sings praise to God who is the Creator, who is the God of Justice, who is the God Who Sees. The psalmist sings praise to God who sees the poor and lifts them up, along with the downtrodden and despairing. God is worthy of praise because God is faithful and just.

God, who created the world, offers us hospitality to dwell here, and in Genesis, the hope was to dwell with God here in on earth for eternity. We are still struggling to get back to that created intent, but one way we do so is by offering hospitality. God, known in the Hebrew Scriptures as enthroned in Jerusalem on Mt. Zion, was known as a refuge for the people who once had wandered in the desert. In the Gospel passage, we also learn that it is not just about extending hospitality, but accepting hospitality from others. Do we do well in accepting hospitality from people who are different from us, or do we still expect them to conform to our standards, even when we are the ones visiting? How well do we extend, and accept, hospitality?

Call to Worship

You are the God of all nations,

 **We give You thanks and praise for who we have become in You.**

You are the God of all peoples,

 **We welcome all in the name of Christ who first welcomed us.**

You are the God of all things,

 **Nations rise, and nations fall, but You are the same God yesterday, today, and forever.**

**We come together to worship You. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Creating God, You created the heavens and earth and continue to create something new in us. But we have labeled and claimed ownership. We have divided and conquered. We have decided who is in, who is out, who has a home and who does not. Forgive us, O God, for not accepting Your hospitality to begin with, and extending that hospitality to others. Forgive us, O God, for not caring for Your creation as You intended. We have failed as guests, and we have assumed our place as hosts. Forgive us, call us to repentance, and help us to be gracious in extending and receiving hospitality, remembering that all we have comes from You. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God welcomes you to this place. God has extended hospitality through Christ Jesus. Accept that you are welcomed by God, and extend that hospitality to others. Forgive as you have been forgiven, and love as you have been loved. Amen.

Prayer

Almighty God, You created us and the world we live in without borders and boundaries. You created all of us in Your image. All of us are Your beloved children. Help us to see our kindred in the world. Help us to tear down the walls and build bridges. Call upon us to cross the borders that we have placed and share Your love by caring for the needs of all. May we remember that You have welcomed us first, and so we ought to welcome one another in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, for the world is Yours, and You came not to condemn the world, but in order that the whole world might be saved. Amen.