Worship Resources for July 7—Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

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

As we follow along in this first thread of the Hebrew Scriptures, of prophets who declared God’s ways even when it was unpopular and their own lives were at risk, we have moved from Elijah to Elisha in 2 Kings 5. This is a familiar story (at least, this is one of the few Old Testament stories that I remember from Sunday School days besides creation, Noah and David and Goliath) of Naaman, commander of a foreign army, who is healed when he follows the words of Elisha. In this story, Elisha doesn’t seem to be doing anything that would call for risking his life, but it is clear that even the king of Israel does not hold prophets in high regard. He’s more upset about what might happen to him than looking for the prophet and passing along the message that Naaman is looking for him. And Elisha’s advice is not earth-shattering. In fact, it’s so simple that Naaman doubts it to be true at first, until he is urged on by his servants to give it a try. Sometimes, it’s the easy things that seem the hardest, the easy teachings of God that are most difficult to follow.

In our second thread, we are hearing the promises of God, the commitment of God through the covenants with the people. Isaiah 66 explicitly uses feminine imagery to refer to God. This image of God as a mother carrying her child, comforting a child who is sad or hurt is extremely nurturing and needed for a community that was coming out of exile. Jerusalem is also seen as a nursing mother caring for her children. The people who have been in exile are like lost children, who have been searching for their mother, but their mother, God, has also been searching and waiting for them. God has not forgotten them, and God will rejoice with them.

Psalm 30 was also a choice back on June 9th for the lectionary. In this psalm, we are reminded of God’s deliverance for those who are faithful, that God will restore what has been destroyed, for God is the God of creation and re-creation. Mourning will turn to dancing. There will be rejoicing and there is hope for the future in God.

Psalm 66:1-9 recalls God’s deliverance of the people from Egypt, and they recall this deliverance in song and praise. This is the God of the living, the God of life, who restores life when it is taken, who renews all things. The people remember God’s acts of deliverance in history and find hope in the stories of old.

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 tells of other followers of Jesus that were sent out to proclaim the good news. They come bringing no goods with them, nor an agenda, but simply to say, “Peace to this house!” If they are not received, they are to wipe the dust off of their sandals, which Jesus already told the twelve to do in their previous mission in 9:1-6. This passage today contains also when the seventy have returned. They are called to go and share the Good News and to do deeds in the name of Jesus that proclaim that Good News. They are not called to condemn, or to preach hellfire and brimstone like John and James in last week’s passage, but rather leave the worrying about who receives the message of God’s love up to God. That’s not their concern. Their concern is to do the Good News: to preach, heal, bless, and bring the message of peace.

Galatians 6:1-16 ends our series of readings from Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia. Paul has been arguing against those that have received the false Gospel, that requires Gentile converts to keep to the Jewish law first, and Paul has been angry with leaders such as Peter who have been hypocrites about what they practice and how they are seen. But Paul concludes his letter with great words of wisdom: to bear one another’s burdens, to restore one another with a spirit of gentleness (in other words, to forgive), to work together for the good of all. Paul’s blessing to them is that they remain strong in Christ, and that all are a new creation in Christ, where the law, where the divisions of Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free do not exist any longer.

How do we live out God’s faithfulness in our lives? How do we witness to others? When we read of the message to the seventy, Jesus is not calling them out to condemn and cause fear but instead to heal and proclaim Good News. God has brought Good News to Naaman if he will only receive it, and good news to the people in exile if only they will claim it. God has brought Good News through Jesus Christ, but it is human beings who have drawn the dividing lines. It is human beings who will not receive the message of peace, who turn away from God’s love, who restrict and condemn others. God desires restoration, healing, and forgiveness, and offers us new life, if we choose to accept it.

Call to Worship (from Matthew 11:28-30)

Come, all that are weary, all that are carrying burdens so heavy

 **Jesus will give us rest**

Come, take what Jesus has to offer: love, forgiveness, and grace

 **Christ will give us peace**

Come, find rest, and learn from Jesus

 **For our Savior will give us rest in our souls**

Come, let us worship our God

 **Let us follow our Savior, who leads us into life.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy God, we know that at times we lack faith. We give up too easily. We say it can’t be done. We throw our hands up in the air and wash ourselves clean of responsibility. Forgive us when we turn away from the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves, the call to follow You, the promise of new life that You give us, because we say it’s too hard. Teach us how to hand our burdens over to you, and renew in us Your strength and endurance for the journey of faith. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God welcomes us when we return. God is waiting with outstretched arms, ready to embrace us. Even when we drag our feet, God will rush out the door to meet us on the road. You are forgiven. You are restored. Go and share the Good News. Amen.

Prayer

God of grace, grant us the spirit of gentleness so that we might be gentle with one another when we have hurt each other. God of grace, grant us the spirit of gentleness so that we might be gentle with ourselves, when we recognize where we have fallen short. God of grace, grant us the spirit of gentleness with the world, that we might declare Your Good News with hearts full of joy rather than condemnation, with ears listening to understand and arms ready to embrace. May we live more fully into Your vision of wholeness. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Resources for Independence Day and Canada Day:

Litany for Canada Day and Independence Day

Leader: Across the land, people will be celebrating our nation’s holiday, and people will share in patriotism and pride.

**People: God of all people, help us to remember all of Your children today.**

Leader: We remember the First Nations, the peoples of the land who came across the land bridge before those that came from across the seas.

**People: God of all people, help us to honor those who walked this land long before us.**

Leader: We confess that we have forgotten the history and neglected the stories of those who lived here before. We confess that the actions of our ancestors and governments caused great harm to the peoples here.

**People: God of all people, help us to remember, to seek to preserve and to honor the voices of those who have gone before us.**

Leader: We know that our country is made up of people from all over the world, from all cultures speaking all languages.

**People: God of all people, help us to celebrate our diversity that was created and gifted by You.**

Leader: Despite the sins of our past, help us to live into a future with hope. Help us to honor those who serve our country in many ways.

**People: God of all people, help our nation to be a peacebuilder. Help us live into the great promises once given to Abraham and Sarah by being the beacons of light, love and peace in the world.**

Leader: Help us to embrace those who have come to our land, help us to bless instead of judge.

**People: God of all people, help us to remember that we are all citizens of Your kingdom, we are all participants in Your community of faith, no matter our country of origin.**

Leader: God of all people, we rejoice and celebrate our nation’s holiday. We rejoice and celebrate that we are Your people, and that we live in a place where we can participate in our local and national governments, where we can speak up and bring change. Even when we feel discouraged in the process, God lift us up. When we see injustice, God help us to speak out. When we see marginalization and oppression, God help us to stand up.

**People: God bless us, all of us, as Your people. God bless ours and every nation, and bless those who have no nation to call home. Bless the refugees. Bless the outcasts. Bless the children and the adults and the grandchildren. Help us to bless each other by remembering each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.**

**All: Amen.**

*This Call to Worship was written in 2012 for use on the Sunday closest to Independence Day and Canada Day—feel free to use as a call to worship or adapt as a litany in your worship service.*

Call to Worship:
Leader: God of all Nations, call us into Your family.
**People: We welcome all people of all cultures and languages, for we are brothers and sisters in Christ.**Leader: God of all ages past and present, call us into Your family.
**People: We walk hand in hand with our seniors and our children, called to be present and share with our homebound and our young ones, for we are brothers and sisters in Christ.**Leader: God of Diversity, call us into Your family.
**People: We embrace all people on the margins, including those of different genders and sexual orientations, for we are brothers and sisters in Christ.**Leader: God of the Poor, God of the Hungry, God of the Oppressed, call us into Your family.
**People: We will speak up and seek justice for all those who suffer, for we are brothers and sisters in Christ.**Leader: God of Creation, call us into Your family.
**People: Call us to embrace and love, to bless and uphold, to remember we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, as we gather to worship You.**