Worship Resources for July 7, 2019—Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Kings 5:1-14 and Psalm 30; Isaiah 66:10-14 and Psalm 66:1-9; Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Psalms, Psalm 40:1-10 (Luke 17:11-19)

Our first selection from the Hebrew scriptures continues the stories of the early prophets. We began a few weeks ago with Elijah, who anointed a new king over Aram and over Israel before anointing Elisha as prophet in his place. Now that Elijah is gone, Elisha is the prophet in Israel. The commander of the army of Aram, Naaman, suffered from leprosy. The king of Aram sends a message to the king of Israel with Naaman to seek healing, and when Elisha meets him, he tells Naaman to go wash in the Jordan seven times. However, Naaman is angry. He’d come a long way simply to be told to go bathe in the river. If that’s all it took, he could’ve done that at home. Nonetheless, Naaman’s servants convince him to do what the prophet has told, for if it had been a difficult request, he would’ve done it—he’s only questioning it because it was so simple. Naaman acquiesces, bathes in the river Jordan, and is made clean.

The psalmist has found healing through God in Psalm 30. For those who are faithful, though there may be mourning, joy will come. God is our restorer and our refuge, and the one who brings healing in our lives. The psalmist pleads with God for continual help, for how can one praise God from the place of death? Instead, the psalmist rejoices, knowing that God is the one who will bring deliverance, and in God we find our hope and give thanks.

The second selection from the Hebrew Scriptures comes from the final chapter of Isaiah. God will comfort the people returning from exile like a mother comforts her child. The prophet calls upon the people to rejoice with the city of Jerusalem, to find their nurture and comfort in her as a child nurses from their mother’s breast. Through the prophet, God extends blessings upon the people of Jerusalem, for their safety and well-being. They “will flourish like the grass,” and God will rejoice in them.

The psalmist calls upon the people to give God joy and praise in Psalm 66:1-9. The psalmist calls the people to come and see what God has done, to give God thanks for God’s works. They recall how God led the people on dry land through the Red Sea and then the Jordan River, and God is the one who watches over them. God is the one who keeps watch on all nations, and all the earth worships God.

Paul ends his letter to the Galatians that they ought to bear one another’s burdens. They ought to be gentle with one another, reaping the spiritual fruit they sow, and working for the good of all. Within the family of faith, Paul warns against those who compel others to be circumcised, for they want circumcision only to boast about it to others. In Christ, they are a new creation, and the only thing they ought to boast in is the cross of Christ. The world has been crucified to Paul, and Paul to the world, because of the work of Christ.

Jesus sends out seventy into the world in Luke 10:1-11, 16-20, “for the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” He sent them out to receive hospitality, but if they were rejected, to simply wipe the dust off their sandals and move on. When they returned, they shared that even the demons submitted to them, and Jesus declared that Satan, and all evil, has no power over them. However, they are not to rejoice that they have power over spirits, but that their names are written in heaven. That the reign of heaven has drawn near.

The Narrative Lectionary concludes its series on the Psalms with Psalm 40:1-10. The psalmist sings that they waited patiently for God, who heard their cry, who brought them out of death and gave them a new song to sing. For those who put their trust in God, they will find God’s wondrous deeds multiplied. God does not desire sacrifices and offerings but rather an inclined heart. God delights in those who proclaim God’s faithfulness and salvation and do not hide what God is doing in them.

In Luke 17:11-19, ten lepers were healed by Jesus, but only one returned to thank him, and he was a Samaritan. It is the foreigner, the outsider, who recognizes the work of God, and Jesus tells him that his faith has made him well.

Trusting God isn’t always easy. In a world of poverty, disease, famine and rejection, it can be difficult to feel that God is in your corner, that God is on your side. However, the scriptures teach us that turning toward God, we recognize God’s presence all around. Working for the good of all, and trusting in the love of others, we find God is working alongside and with us. Accepting hospitality and kindness from others is also an act of good works, not simply helping others, for we all must bear each other’s burdens, and carry each other as people of faith.

Call to Worship (from Galatians 6:2, 5, 9-10)

Bear one another’s burdens,

**In this way, we fulfill the law of Christ.**

Carry each other’s joys and sorrows,

**For we are in this together, one body in Christ.**

Do not grow weary in doing what is right;

**For we know God’s abundant love in Christ.**

Work for the good of all, especially for the family of faith;

**For we are in this together, and we do not give up.**

We enter this time of worship:

**One body, one love, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy One, we confess that our trust is often misguided, placed in institutions and worldly leaders rather than in You. We put our trust in the stock market, the quarterly projections, the poll numbers. We look to the signs for wealth and prosperity instead of the signs of Your work around us, often on the margins, among those with the most need. We search for assurance among those who say what we want to hear, rather than listening to the cries for justice that make us uncomfortable. Forgive us for placing our trust in the world we created, rather than in You, the Creator of heaven and earth. Call us to repent, to turn back to You. Open our hearts to discern Your voice, and to place our trust in You, our Maker, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Our heart hums the tune that our Maker sings. There is no place you can go, no place you can hide or be forgotten, where your heart will not know the song of God. God knows your voice and calls you by name. You are forgiven, loved, and restored. Come, sing the song of your heart, and follow the voice of God, who leads us onward. Amen.

Prayer

God of Grace, and God of Glory, we sing Your praises, for Your name is on our lips and in our heart. You have called each of us to sing in harmony with the great opus You have written and orchestrated with all of creation. May we know our part, when it is time for us to sing, and time for us to be silent and allow other voices to carry on. May we follow Your conducting, blending our voices to help enhance one another. In all things, may we trust in You when the notes do not seem to be right, for we know You will resolve the tune, for You hold the key. Amen.