Worship Resources for July 9, 2017—Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 and Psalm 45:10-17 or Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Zechariah 9:9-12 and Psalm 145:8-14; Romans 7:15-25a; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Narrative Lectionary: Psalms, Psalm 150 (John 4:24-26)

As we follow the origins of the Hebrew People, we read the story of how Isaac and Rebecca meet. Abraham’s servant has traveled far to the land of his father’s people, and has met Rebecca, who has shown kindness to the servant and has cared for his animals. His request is a big one, for it would mean Rebecca would leave her home and probably never see her family again. Marriages were arranged by the men of the families, and women had no say, but in this story, her father and her brother both ask her, “Will you go with this man?” It appears that Rebekah does have a final say in the matter, and she gives her consent. She also appears to be ready to meet Isaac, donning her veil before meeting him. Rebekah, as we will see when her sons are grown, is a woman who took charge of her own life despite her limited choices.

Psalm 45:10-17 is a song of marriage to a king, a song to persuade the bride to be that leaving her home and family will be all right, that she will now be a princess, and will have sons who will become princes. She is to enter with joy and gladness into this union, and the king’s name will be praised forever.

Another marriage song is in Song of Solomon 2:8-13, but this song focuses on love and desire, and uses the metaphor of springtime and the blooming of nature to spark love. It is time to get married, because love is alive—arise, my fair one, and come away!

Our second selection from the Hebrew Scriptures focuses on the prophets, and Zechariah 9:9-12 is a familiar passage that became part of the scriptures that were used in reflection upon the Messiah, as the king enters the city not on a warhorse, but humble, and on a donkey. The king shall come in peace, and release the captives. The Gospels echo this passage in the Palm Sunday narratives as they recall Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey.

Psalm 145:8-14 speaks assurance of God’s faithfulness, mercy and compassion. The works of God declare to the world that God’s reign is one that lasts forever, and God’s faithfulness endures forever.

Paul speaks of his personal struggles with sin in Romans 7:15-25a. He knows that he has given his life to Christ, has been baptized with Christ, but that within him that still does what he doesn’t want is sin. Sin has been put to death in Christ. Paul is thankful for Christ because sin no longer has power over him. Sin will no longer have the final word. Even though we are still sinners, Christ died for us, and that sin will not overcome us.

Jesus speaks in Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30 after John the Baptist has sent his disciples from prison, asking if Jesus was the Messiah, or if they were to wait for another. And while Jesus has a strong response to John, he knows that others are thinking the same thing. They judge John and Jesus in the same way. Because John lived a life separate from others, they thought him weird, or that he had a demon. Because Jesus engaged in social life, including eating and drinking, they called him a drunkard and a glutton. Jesus, and John before him, were never good enough for the people, never seemed to fit the right standard. But those who do come to Jesus will find peace and rest, will find relief for their burdens. They will find the Messiah because the Messiah will understand their needs. They will find the Messiah because they are seeking God, not a celebrity, not a guru, but the son of God.

The Narrative Lectionary concludes the series on the Psalms and the Gospel of John with Psalm 150, the great psalm calling the people to worship. The psalmist calls the people to worship with musical instruments, and calls all of creation, everything that has breath, to praise God.

The Woman at the Well, the Woman from Samaria, knows that the Messiah is coming, but in John 4:24-26, Jesus declares that true worshipers will worship God in spirit and in truth, and declares that he himself is the Messiah, the one she, and others, have been waiting for.

Celebrating and giving thanks—we have been called by God to do this. Sometimes the work isn’t rewarding, especially when we are knee-deep in the muck of injustice. But everything that has breath has been called to praise God. We stop and we celebrate when two people join their lives together in marriage. Sometimes we think it is not the time to celebrate, but Christ reminds us that it is always time when the bridegroom is with us, when the Messiah is with us. It is always time to remember and rejoice that the ways of the world, the sin of the world, does not have a hold on us. Rejoice! Praise the Lord!

Call to Worship

Come, join us in this celebration of life!

 **Come, join us in this worship of the living God!**

Come, join our hearts in prayer and praise!

 **Come, join our hearts in the call and pursuit of justice!**

Come, join with us in this movement of God’s people!

 **Come, join with us in the Way, the Truth, and the Life!**

Come, join us in this celebration of life!

 **Come, join us in this worship of the living God!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Spirit of Truth, we confess that we lie to ourselves. We tell ourselves that we can’t make a difference. We tell ourselves that the work is too great and our impact too small. We tell ourselves that we won’t be missed, that we don’t matter. Spirit of Truth, reveal to us how You have called each of us into the ministry of Christ. Spirit of Truth, reveal to us how much we are loved and needed. Spirit of Truth, don’t let us off the hook when we want to give up. Spirit of Truth, call us into accountability, reconciliation, and Your ways of mercy and justice and peace. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God is always doing something new, in our world and in our lives. God is always doing something new in you. When the world brings you down, in the words of Lin-Manuel Miranda, “Look around, look around, at how lucky we are to be alive right now.” Look around, look around, God’s Spirit is moving around us right now. Be open. Be accepting. Be loving. Be kind. And know that the goodness and loving kindness of our God are with you always. Amen.

Prayer

Holy and Blessed One, remind us that Your people are holy. All people are Your children, and all of Your children are holy. Despite the rhetoric of exceptionalism, You have chosen each one of us, made each one of us in Your image, and have blessed us. May we live into this blessing by blessing others, encouraging others, celebrating our differences as well as our similarities. Help us to find common ground and to grow common seeds of love, acceptance, and kindness. For each of us is Your child; each of us has the capacity for love and forgiveness and mercy; each of us has the promise of new life, given by You. Help us to grow into the fullness of Your intention for us; help us to grow into the fullness of eternal life. In the name of Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.