Worship Resources for August 10th, 2014—Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 or 1 Kings 19:9-18; Psalm 85:8-13 or Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b; Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33

The first thread in the Old Testament follows the story of the ancestors of our faith, from Abraham and Sarah to Joseph and his family in Egypt to the Exodus. We have moved through the generations to Joseph, the story of a dreamer who was a little too enthusiastic to share his dreams with his brothers, whose father favored him a little too much in front of his brothers, and they sold him into slavery. However, we know that when troubled times came to the family and they ended up in Egypt, eventually they are saved from drought by Joseph, and they are reconciled. Though they had intended to cause harm to Joseph, instead of ignoring or seeking revenge, Joseph eventually chooses to forgive, reconcile and restore his family. The choices Joseph makes later in life, despite what has happened to him and despite how cocky he may have been as a youth, show God’s faithfulness in his life and God’s desire for forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration.

Our second thread follows the prophets of God. We find Elijah, weary and worn, feeling dejected and alone, and he finds God’s presence in the sound of sheer silence. Elijah’s strength is renewed when God appoints Elisha to be anointed as prophet in Elijah’s place, and a new king to be anointed, and God also tells Elijah there are others who are still loyal. Though Elijah has been persecuted and has faced the wrath of the current reign, God promises Elijah that there is still hope, and Elijah finds new strength in the assurance of God’s presence now and in time to come.

Psalm 85:8-13 tells the people that God’s words are the words of peace. The psalmist sings that God speaks peace to the people and that all of creation rejoices in God’s faithfulness. Love, righteousness, faithfulness and peace will grow and flourish for those who listen to the words of God.

Psalm 105:1-5, 16-22, 45b shares words of God’s faithfulness through Joseph, and calls upon the people to give thanks through song, for God has done wonderful things for them, past, present and future. The people are called to remember the stories of old and God’s faithfulness to their ancestors.

Romans 10:5-15 contains a passage that is often taken out of context, Paul’s words about confessing Jesus is Lord. Paul states we should not be concerned about who is going to heaven or hell because we bring Christ down when we are concerned about heaven and we try to play God when we are concerned about hell and judgment. Rather, we ought to be concerned about our own salvation, and be honest in our words and in our heart as to who our Lord is. We are called not to judge others—there is no Jew or Greek—but rather to judge ourselves and live out our lives faithfully to God’s call.

Matthew 14:22-33 is the story of Jesus walking on water. Before that act, however, Jesus has gone away alone to pray. He had dismissed the crowds and sent the disciples out on a boat, and he went up the mountain by himself to pray and stayed all night. Jesus took time out to rest and find renewal. But the disciples did not take their time for rest and renewal on the boat—the wind was stirring the waves that were battering the boat also battered their courage and faith. Peter is the first to trust that this might not be a ghost, but Jesus actually coming out to them on the water, but even he wavers and falters until they are both safely back in the boat and the wind has stopped.

We all go through periods of doubt and challenges to our faith. It is how we act (or react) in times of doubt and our struggles that is of importance. Having faith does not mean we won’t have times of doubt or questions—if we don’t have those times, how can we have faith? We have faith in spite of our doubts and challenges. Do we still act with hope? Do we look to our ancestors in the faith for examples of courage? Do we trust that we will get through the dark valleys? Faith is what helps us to get through those times of doubt, when the wind and waves are battering us, but it doesn’t mean they go away. It means we step out again and again despite having sunk before.

Call to Worship (from 1 Corinthians 13)

Love is patient and kind,

 **Love is not jealous, arrogant or rude.**

Love does not insist on its own way,

 **Love does not celebrate wrong, but rejoices in the truth.**

Love bears all things, believes all things,

 **Love hopes all things, and endures all things, and never ends.**

Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

 **Let us worship our God of love, of hope, and of faith. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy God, we come before You acknowledging that we have acted poorly in times of faith and doubt. We have ignored our neighbors in need and forgotten the cries of the poor and hungry around us. We have cried out in anger to You when we are lacking our desires, and claim You have not heard us. Forgive us for our shortcomings. Forgive us for not acting in faithfulness to our neighbors and to You. Turn us back to Your ways. In the name of Christ, who went to the cross for us and cried out to You, we pray all things. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Christ is the one who calls out to us in the storms of life and says, “It is I, do not be afraid.” Trust that God is calling you, even when you cannot hear God’s voice. Know that God loves you, even if you don’t always feel loved. Know that you are forgiven, even if you don’t always feel you deserve it. God loves you so much God has sent Jesus to the world, so that all of us might know God’s love. Know this, and live.

Prayer

Creator of Life, You desire for us to have life abundantly. A full life includes times of struggle and doubts. Guide us through the troubled times with care and with the confidence that You are present with us and will see us through to the other side. Help us to bear one another’s burdens and share in one another’s celebrations. Remind us always to pray, to care, and to reach out to each other, so that we might travel through the times of doubts and challenges with hope leading us forward. In the name of Christ, the Light of the World that guides us, we pray. Amen.