Worship Resources for August 21, 2016—Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Jeremiah 1:4-10 or Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 71:1-6 or Psalm 103:1-8; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17

Narrative Lectionary: The Lord’s Supper, Luke 11:2-4

The prophet Jeremiah was called as a young boy by God. Jeremiah protests to God that he doesn’t know how to speak as a prophet, because he’s only a boy, but God tells him to not be afraid, that God will be with him and God will tell him what to speak. God touches Jeremiah’s mouth, putting God’s words into his mouth, and has appointed him to proclaim to the nations what God is doing.

The prophet Isaiah speaks a blessing from God to the people if they follow God’s way of justice—if they stop blaming one another, if they care for the needs of others and stop oppressing the poor, they will know God’s presence among them. They will see God’s restoration at work in them. In a beautiful line from the prophet, they “shall be called the repairer of the breach” (vs 12). If they seek God first and honor God’s ways over their own, they will know the joy of God in their lives, knowing God’s faithfulness.

Psalm 71:1-6 echoes the statement of God to the prophet Jeremiah, that God is the one who has known us since the womb, and God is the one who delivers us. The psalmist calls upon God for deliverance and refuge, knowing that God is our refuge, God is our hope. The psalmist puts their trust in God for rescue from evil.

Psalm 103:1-8 is a song blessing God who forgives and redeems. The psalmist sings of how God renews us and restores us, and how God seeks justice for all who are oppressed. The psalmist recalls Moses who led in God’s ways, and that all of the people have seen the acts of God.

Hebrews 12:18-29 speaks of coming before God, similar to the days of old when the people could not touch the mountain, but only Moses could come before God with trembling and fear—but rather this is a new experience, the holy city of the heavenly Jerusalem. Jesus is the “mediator of the new covenant” and is the one inviting all to come. The writer warns that the invitation ought not to be refused, for this is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Jesus heals a woman who has had back issues for eighteen years in Luke 13:10-17. She has been unable to stand up straight all these years. Jesus faces flack for healing her because he did so on the Sabbath. Jesus then refers to the woman as having been “bound by Satan” because no one would help her. Jesus accuses the leaders of being hypocrites because they certainly would help themselves or their own property if it were in need on the Sabbath, but not this woman. They may have perceived her as a stranger, but Jesus saw her as a child of God in need.

The Narrative Lectionary repeats for the next month on the Lord’s Supper, Luke 11:2-4. One idea is to take each part of the prayer and divide it up over these four weeks. Here is the reflection I wrote last week:

Luke’s account is very short and doesn’t include all of the words Protestants use in the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer. All Jesus includes is this: Father, hallowed be your name (God our Parent/Father: your name is holy). Your Kingdom Come (God’s beloved community, God’s kin-dom, God’s reign, come). Give us each day our daily bread (fulfill our daily needs). And forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone indebted to us (forgive others because you are forgiven; forgive others the things you ask for forgiveness for; forgive us, because we forgive others). And do not bring us to the time of trial (do not bring us to that point where we are tested beyond what we can face). That’s it—five statements. Five you can remember on your fingers. Five things we should pray for—the first two really are statements to God, not asking for anything, until we get to our daily bread, asking for forgiveness, and to not be led into trial.

Throughout the Bible, but especially through the words of the prophets we hear the call of God to justice. Justice in the Bible always refers to those on the margins, especially the poor, widows, and orphans, and also those who are disabled, foreigners or strangers—anyone who might be on the outside, anyone who might be forgotten about. God has not forgotten them. God also does not forget how we care for others—or do not care for them. God has included those whom we have excluded, intentionally or unintentionally, and God’s justice is a restorative justice. We have been called to be “repairers of the breach,” though we have failed to live up to that call time and again.

Call to Worship

God will fulfill your needs; God will strengthen you;

**God is filling us like a wellspring, replenishing us for the work we are called to do.**

God has called us to repair what has been breached;

**God is calling us to the work of restoration and reconciliation.**

God has called us to honor the Sabbath, to delight in God;

**On this day, we hear God calling us into prayer and praise.**

Come, worship God, who needs us in this world.

**Let us worship our God, who leads us into life.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Architect of the Universe, we have broken down the bridges You constructed. We have neglected the foundations You have laid. We have built towers to honor ourselves and buildings to display our possessions. Forgive us for ignoring Your plan in the world, for life abundantly, for forgiveness and healing, and for reconciliation. Help us to tear down the walls we have put in place, and instead, restore the world to Your intention. In the name of Christ, who leads us into the new design, the new Covenant, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

Every moment is a restoration moment. Every moment contains the possibility for newness, for healing, and for forgiveness. Every moment holds the opportunity for God’s love to flourish. Embrace the moment: turn, change, repent, set forth—knowing God has never once left you alone. God is with you, in each and every moment, calling out to you. Listen to God’s voice, know God’s love in your heart, and embrace the moment now. Amen.

Prayer

God Most High, we come before You knowing we need direction. We come before You knowing we need guidance, and endurance for the journey before us. We come before You knowing we have been unable to do this on our own though we have tried, and will continue to try. God Most High, help us to remember the call of our ancestors to follow You into a new place, where they had never gone before. Help us to live with their faith in our hearts, to know You are leading us into the newness of life today. Call us to your work of justice, mercy, and healing. In Christ’s restorative love, we pray. Amen.