Worship Resources for August 3rd, 2014—Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 32:22-31 or Isaiah 55:1-5; Psalm 17:1-7, 15 or Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21

Our first thread in the Hebrew Scriptures of Genesis 32:22-31 contains a pivotal moment for the ancestors of the people of Israel. Jacob, leaving his father-in-law’s home, wrestles with an angel of God. Jacob is leaving the previous generation for the last time—he left his parent’s home to go to his uncle’s, and now he leaves his uncle’s to set out on his own. It is a coming of age story, not just for Jacob, but for the people of Israel, obtaining a new name and new identity—one who wrestles with God. God is no longer something inherited through the worship by our parents and grandparents, but rather God is someone we encounter ourselves, individually and communally, and we wrestle with our encounter, with our relationship with God and others.

Isaiah 55:1-5 is a reminder to the people returning from exile that it is God who satisfies and supplies their needs. The way of the world is to seek one’s own success and satisfaction, but true satisfaction is in God and living into God’s ways. God calls the people through the prophet to follow the voice of God, to turn to God, and that other nations will learn of God through their witness.

In Psalm 17:1-7, 15, the psalmist sings a plea to God to deliver them from evil, proclaiming their faithfulness and trustworthiness to God. The psalmist proclaims they have been faithful and they know that God will be faithful to them, and that God will judge what is true.

Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21 is a song to the Lord with refrains about God’s goodness and just ways, that God watches over all those who love the Lord. God is the one who provides and is just in all God’s ways. The psalmist sings praises to God for God’s faithfulness and enduring love.

Romans 9:1-5 is part of the crux of Paul’s argument—that he loves Israel and loves the traditions of his people, but that being part of God’s children is not about human birth but about God’s adoption of all of us—that all of us are to become children of God. Israel was chosen to receive the covenant, the law, the worship and the promises—they have the patriarchs and the prophets—but that alone does not mean they are children of God, but that God loves us all, we are all children of God through Christ Jesus.

Matthew 14:13-21 contains the feeding of the five thousand—one of the few stories that is in all four Gospel accounts. Whether or not one believes in the miracle that the food miraculously multiplied, or that people began to share what they had brought for themselves and had kept back—it is in the conversation with the disciples that we hear Jesus’ command “You give them something to eat” (vs. 16) when the disciples suggest he sends the people away. Why did Jesus command the disciples to feed them? Because they were hungry.

We are called to fulfill the needs of the world, to serve Christ by serving others. It is easy for us to tell hungry people to go to a soup kitchen or food bank to find food; it is much harder for us to prepare a meal and share it. We are called to witness that all of us are God’s children, and we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves and witness to Christ in the world by our own words and deeds.

Call to Worship (from Luke 1:49,53)

The Mighty One has done great things for us,

 **Holy is God’s name.**

God has filled the hungry with good things,

 **God has sent the full away empty.**

God has remembered those who serve others,

 **And we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves.**

Come, let us witness God’s love in word and deed,

 **Let us serve Christ by serving all who are in need. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Loving God, we confess that we have not followed Your ways and we have forgotten Your commandments. We have left the poor hungry and sick. We have left the ill without medicine and care. We have left our brothers and sisters from other nations without justice and declared them illegal and treated them as less than human. Forgive us for our lack of love and compassion. Forgive us for not seeing our neighbors as ourselves. Forgive us, most of all, for not seeing You in the faces of those all around in need. In the name of Christ, who shows us compassion and mercy, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Christ became last of all and servant of all so that we might know God’s love, forgiveness and restoration. You are loved, forgiven, and restored to God. Go and share the good news by serving all of God’s children, especially our brothers and sisters in need. Amen.

Prayer

God of our Ancestors, God of our Descendants, God of us All, we pray in this time for You to remind us of who we really are: Your children, created in Your image, created for good. We are Your beloved. Help us to share Your love with all, that all of Your children might be reconciled to You and that we might be reconciled to one another. Help us to seek out those who are in need, and to share out of what we have been given. Help us to remember not only our call to follow You, but the call of our brothers and sisters. Help us not only to fulfill their needs, but to truly see them as our brothers and sisters. In Your love, grace, and mercy we pray. Amen.