Worship Resources for August 5, 2018—Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a and Psalm 51:1-12; Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15 and Psalm 78:23-29; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35

Narrative Lectionary: Series on Ruth, 3:1-18 (Matthew 7:7-8)

David thought he got away with the murder of Uriah, but the prophet Nathan reveals to him his sin by telling a parable of injustice. In our first selection for the Hebrew scriptures in this season after Pentecost, as we follow the rise of the kings of Israel, we know that David was not perfect. Instead of being satisfied with all that he had, all God had given to him, David still wanted more, and took it. He desired Bathsheba and had her brought to him, and then, once she was pregnant, desired to cover up the rape and pregnancy by having Uriah murdered. David, it turns out, is just like Saul. Though he may appear innocent on the outside, Nathan has revealed his inner sin—that he did not turn to God, and was not satisfied with what he had. He was outraged at the person in the parable, believing it to be a real story about another person—until Nathan revealed the parable was about him.

Psalm 52, often attributed to David, is a psalm of confession. The psalmist seeks mercy from God, knowing that they have sinned. They call upon God for inner cleansing, that they may be ritually pure before God once again, and not judged by their sins. The psalmist requests for a new, clean heart from God, and a renewed spirit.

In our second selection for the Hebrew scriptures, the people complain to Moses in the wilderness. In Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15, the people whine that it would have been better to die with food in slavery, than to experience the hunger and hardship of the wilderness. God tells Moses that bread will be provided for them, manna that rains down from heaven. God also provided quail for the people, but they question what the manna is, not understanding that God was the one who was leading them and providing for them.

In this portion of Psalm 78:23-29, the psalmist recalls how God provided for the people in the wilderness. The rhythm of the psalm can still be felt in the English translation, a call and response litany perhaps, that God, out of the abundance of heaven, provided for the people.

In this portion of the letter to the Ephesians, the writer speaks of the life God has given each of us, a life that is united in Christ through our baptism. However, God gives a variety of spiritual gifts to equip us for ministry and to work for the unity of the body of Christ. The writer warns about the teachings of others, for there were many smaller factions within the church, but instead encourages the readers to speak the truth in love and to grow in every way in Christ, who is the head of the body.

We continue our Gospel selection in John 6 with verses 24-35. Following the feeding of the five thousand, the crowds track down Jesus in Capernaum. Jesus knows they are looking for him because they are hungry for more, but Jesus states they need to work for the food of eternal life, not the temporary that perishes. The signs they saw were not enough to satisfy, they want more—but Jesus claims that the sign is that they believe. It is God who gives the true bread from heaven. Those who believe and come to Christ will not die but live. They will be satisfied.

The Narrative Lectionary continues its series on Ruth with the third chapter. Whereas Ruth had taken the initiative in helping to provide for her widowed mother-in-law, in this chapter, Naomi instructs Ruth on what to do to secure her own future. She tells Ruth to go to Boaz at night to lie down with him, so that he knows she is faithful to him. It’s clear to Naomi that Boaz thinks fondly of Ruth and treats her very well and would make a good match. It pleasantly surprises Boaz when Ruth comes and lays down with him, but Boaz knows the family and knows that there is a family member more closely related. Boaz tells her he has to inform the other family member, but if they will not act as next-of-kin for her, he will. He makes sure she is well provided for and that her reputation is intact before she leaves in the morning.

From the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:7-8, Jesus says that those who seek God will find God. Those who search will find what they are looking for, and the doors will be opened. Be persistent with God, and God will be persistent with you.

Seeking God’s will and not our own is a lifelong struggle. We desire the things of this world; namely, we desire what other’s have. But if we seek God’s will, we seek the well-being of others, and we find that our needs are also taken care of. For the desires of this world are fleeting and temporary, and will not satisfy us. However, in looking to what God desires of us, which is to love and care for one another, we find what we need, because others are also sharing God’s love and care with us. The love we have for one another is a mutual love that comes from God. When we look to the needs of others, our own needs are met. When we look to our own needs first, we will never be satisfied.

Call to Worship

There is one body and one Spirit,

 **One God, one faith, one baptism;**

One God, Maker of us All,

 **Who is above all, and through all, and in all.**

Each of us has been given grace,

 **A free gift from Christ our Savior.**

We enter this time of worship,

 **Knowing that we have been forgiven, loved, and reconciled to God;**

 **We are the one body of Christ. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Maker of us all, we confess that we have fallen away from Your intention for our lives. We have sought the ways of this world, seeking what others have, and dissatisfied with what we’ve been given, even when our needs are met. We put possessions above people. We have confused need with desire. Forgive us. Call us back into Your intention for us, to love one another and to care for this earth that You made. Call us back to Your ways of love, justice, and peace. Help us to learn that when we care for others, our needs are met. When we care for this earth, there is enough for everyone, and for all creatures. Maker of us all, call us into Your way of life, away from the ways of this world. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

You were made by God. God can never forget you. God will never abandon you. You are made in God’s image and you are loved. Know that this love is always with you and can never be taken from you. Grow in this love, grow in your love for others, and you will know the presence of God with you, always. Amen.

Prayer

Cultivator of Life, help the seeds that You have planted in us to grow. Breathe Your Spirit into us. Water us with Your love, and nurture us in the traditions and teachings that have been passed to us. When we are shriveling, shower us with Your love. When we are falling, blow in us and through us with Your Spirit. When we are feeling stunted, remind us to return to Scripture, to the songs and hymns, to the stories we know in our heart, and help us to grow again. To the one who has planted the seeds in all of us, we pray. Amen.