Worship Resources for August 7, 2016—Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 or Genesis 15:1-6; Psalm 33:12-22 or Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

Narrative Lectionary: Job 42:7-17

Isaiah is called by God to speak out against the people and their leaders who have gone astray from God’s ways but yet seek God through ritual and sacrifice. God has had enough—instead, God wants them to live their lives in the ways. God wants to work it out—“argue it out”—the way lawyers (or sometimes couples) do, and get the people to come around, to repent and follow God’s ways.

Genesis 15:1-6 contains God’s promise to Abram (before he was known as Abraham) that he will have an heir, that he will have descendants more numerous than the stars. Abram is afraid that what he has now will pass to someone who is not family—a real concern of the culture of the time—but God assures Abram that there is a larger picture, and that God has much, much more in store.

The psalmist calls upon the people to look to God as their leader in Psalm 33:12-22. Earthly kings will fail. Armies and warriors are not the ones who truly save the people. God is the one who saves us all from death, in whom we can put our trust.

In Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23, God is seen as the Mighty One, the Creator, and the people ought not to forget this. God will show salvation to those who follow God’s ways. Most of all, God is the ultimate judge of all, and those who give their thanksgiving to God will know God’s righteousness.

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 speaks of faith being the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. The writer uses Abraham and his son and grandson as examples of those who lived by faith, who saw God’s promises made in their lives, but the fruition long after they had died. The writer uses the image of seeing a homeland, and in God we have the promise of our homeland, a promise that we hold on to so we do not look back, but look ahead.

The lectionary continues with Luke chapter 12, with Jesus continuing to tell the crowds to sell their possessions and remember that their heart is where their treasure is. Jesus tells a parable of a man returning from a wedding banquet and finding his servants ready. Jesus tells the crowd to be dressed for action and have their lamps lit—in other words, be ready at all times to participate in the reign of God, to wait for Christ to enter our world and our lives in a new way.

The Narrative Lectionary completes its series on Job. In true storylike fashion, the three friends of Job who gave him poor advice and tried to make him feel like it was all his fault get their due. They are called to make sacrifice and God tells them Job will pray for them, because that’s what Job does—he continues to remain faithful, even when he was angry and bitter. And then God restores the fortunes of Job, including a new family, and in an unusual twist in Biblical stories, all three daughters are named and also given an inheritance—treated as equals with their brothers, who are not named. Despite what Job has gone through, he has come to the other side remembering that God is the God of the universe, and not just little old him. Perhaps that rubbed off on him and how he treated his children later.

If we are living for the beloved community, the reign or kin-dom of God; if we are loving our neighbors and caring for their well-being; if we are treating others the way we desire to be treated, we understand that the most valuable things are our relationships with one another, not treasures here on earth. Our homeland that God is preparing for us, a future with hope, is at hand, and still coming.

Call to Worship (from Isaiah 1:16c-17)

Cease to do evil;

 **Learn to do good.**

Seek justice;

 **Rescue the oppressed.**

Defend the orphan;

 **Plead for the widow.**

God knows our sins,

 **God offers us forgiveness and restoration.**

Come, worship our God,

 **Who is giving us a fresh start right now. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Holy One, we have devalued our neighbors and valued our possessions. We have locked up our wealth and ignored the people living on our streets. We cover our cars while our kindred go without shelter. Forgive us for treating property better than we treat Your children. Forgive us for our short-sightedness and selfish ways. Call us into valuing people, valuing relationships, much more than the things of this world that will surely pass away. In the name of Christ, who called us to give up our possessions and love our neighbors as ourselves, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

If we are willing, God has shown us a new way. If we are willing, God has laid the foundation before us for a new life. If we are willing, we know that God has forgiven us, and restores us. If we are willing, we know that God’s love is all around. If we are willing, we know that Christ has called us to love our neighbor. If we are willing, we know that our lives have been transformed forever by Christ. If we are willing, may we go share the Good News. Amen.

Prayer

Love of Love, Light of Light, lead us in Your ways of love to heal the brokenness in our world. Light the path of righteousness so we might live in right ways that honor our neighbors and the earth You created. Shine Your Light and Love into the cracks of brokenness around us to let Your light shine through. Grow Your Love and Light in all of us to be agents of healing and wholeness, to bring the change You wish to see in this world. In the name of Christ, the Light of the World, the Love of Your Heart, we pray. Amen.