

LECTIONARY LITURGY

FOR WEEKLY WORSHIP

SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2011

YEAR A

16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

GENESIS 28:10-19

PSALM 139:1-12, 23-24

ROMANS 8:12-25

MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43

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LECTIONARY LITURGY

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PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

A Blessing for Worship Planners

As you plan worship this week:

*Know that God is with you
& will keep you wherever you go...
& will not leave you.*
(Genesis 28:15)

Scripture Texts

- **Genesis 28:10-19a**
Jacob's dream of a ladder extending to heaven
- **Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24**
O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
- **Romans 8:12-25**
*All who are led by the Spirit are children of God...
I consider that the sufferings of the present time
are not worth comparing to the glory...*
- **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**
Parable of the Weeds & its Explanation

Worship Themes (& Sermon Titles)

Genesis 28 & Psalm 139

- Never Alone: God is With Us Always

Genesis 28

- God's Dreaming through Us

Psalm 139

- Intimately Known (& Understood) by God

Romans 8

- Living by the Spirit
- Family of Faith – Children of God

Welcome to Lectionary Liturgy!

Each week, Lectionary Liturgy provides a variety of choices to help you plan a worship service (traditional, blended, contemporary or alternative) that is steeped in scripture.

Many suggestions and ideas are given. Most are creative. Some are gently contemplative. Some are both. Choose the elements that are right for your worship style and setting.

No matter what text or theme you choose as a focus, you can add a scriptural layer of richness and depth by using words and images from another text for your liturgy.

Adapt & change. Add & augment. Bring your own creativity & imagination to the art of creating a worship service that is meaningful & relevant to your congregation.

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

PRAYER of INVOCATION (Genesis 28 or General)

(GENESIS 28)

Surely, O Lord, you are present in this place, with us as we worship. You are with us in the reading of your word, in voices that join in singing your praise, and in this community, gathered in the name of Christ. Surely, O Lord, you are present in this place, as we worship you. Heighten our awareness. Draw us closer to you. *AMEN*

OR

(GENERAL)

Come, Holy Spirit, into our worship, as we sing and praise.
Come, Holy Spirit, into our hearts, as we seek God's guidance in our lives.
Come, Holy Spirit, into this community, as we gather in the name of Jesus. *AMEN*

CALL TO WORSHIP (Genesis 28 or Psalm 139)

(GENESIS 28)

Like Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven,
So we dream of you, O God, and reach toward you to find that you are already reaching toward us.

In Jacob's dream, the Lord spoke, "Know that I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go."

We know that you are with us, O Lord, and will keep us wherever we go.

When Jacob woke, he said, "Surely the Lord is in the place and I did not know it."

Surely you are present in this place, O God. Help us to know and believe.

Let us worship God together!

OR

(PSALM 139:7-10 NRSV) SIMPLY SCRIPTURE

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

God is with us always! God is with us now! Let us worship God, together.

CALL to CONFESSION (Psalm 139)

(If you didn't use Psalm 139:1-4 in your Call to Worship, use it in your Call to Confession. Or, use verses 23-24.)

In Psalm 139:1-4, we read: *O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.* Let us confess together to our God who knows us completely.

OR

In Psalm 139:23-24, we read: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Let us confess to God together.

PRAYER of CONFESSION (Psalm 139 or Romans 8)

Unison

(PSALM 139)

O Lord, you are acquainted with all our ways. You know us completely. Hear us as we approach you honestly. You know that, at times, we try but fail to live up to your desire for us. You know that, at times, we don't even try. Forgive us, O God, for thoughts that displease you. Forgive us, O God, for spoken words that don't honor you. Forgive us, O God, when we walk down a path that leads away from you. Forgive us, we pray, in the name of Jesus. *AMEN*

(OPTIONAL: And hear us we speak to you in silence, of the sin that is uniquely ours to confess...)

OR

(ROMANS 8)

Loving God, we come to you, distracted and unfocused, too full of ourselves and our own desires. Help us this morning, to clear our minds of worries and plans. Help us to let go of unkindness and any grudges we hold. Help us to look beyond our lives, and to center ourselves in your goodness and grace. Like a loving and caring parent, O Lord, guide us to make choices that honor you. Remind us that we are your children, who cry, "Abba, Father," and that we depend on you, completely. *AMEN*

(OPTIONAL: And now, in the silence of this sacred place, and in the privacy of our hearts, hear us as we confess to you, in silence...)

ASSURANCE of PARDON (Psalm 139 or Romans 8)

(PSALM 139)

Leader: God created us. God knows us intimately and understands us completely. Hear and accept the good news of the gospel.

People: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

OR

(ROMANS 8:12-16)

Leader: As children of God, led by the Spirit, we claim the amazing promise of the gospel.

People: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

PRAYER AFTER THE OFFERING (General)

Gracious God, you have given us everything. We return but a portion of all that you have given us. Bless these gifts that they might further your kingdom, here on earth. AMEN

OR

Generous God, you call us to follow you, to give from our resources generously and willingly. May these gifts enable your good work to be done, in our community, our nation and throughout the world, in the name of Jesus. AMEN

BENEDICTION (Genesis 28 or Psalm 139)

(GENESIS 28)

In Genesis 28, the Lord says to Jacob in his dream, "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go...for I will not leave you." Know that God is with you and will keep you wherever you go...and will not leave you. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the encouraging presence of the Holy Spirit be with you.

AMEN

OR

(PSALM 139)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

May the love of God encourage you.

And may the presence of the Holy Spirit remind that you are never alone.

God is with you, always.

AMEN

PASTORAL PRAYER (Romans 8, Summertime)

Ahead of time, jot down prayer joys and concerns in the space provided. Often only concerns are shared. Think ahead of joyful opportunities or occasions in your church or your community.

Holy God,
Creator of all that is and all that will be, we approach you amazed that you call us your children – children who are loved, wanted, and included by you. We give you praise that you invite each of us into personal relationship, that you ask us to talk to you, and involve you in our lives and in our decisions.

We thank you for the ways that we have felt joy and celebration this week. We thank you for summer vacations and summer chances to slow down. We also thank you for:

-
-
-

We thank you, O God, and we praise you, that we can draw near to you, with the concerns that burden our hearts and minds. We pray especially for:

-
-
-
-

We ask that you would hear our prayers, those that we have spoken, those names that we have lifted to you, and also those names that we speak to you now in the silence...
(Leave at least 10 seconds of silence, so that worshippers have time to articulate their prayer.)

Be with each one, dear Lord, in the ways that they need you. Bring healing and hope to each of them and touch them with your holy touch, that their lives might be changed, and be brought even closer to you.

Loving God, we pray for peace in a violent world. We pray for wisdom in a confusing world. We pray for hope in a world that sometimes feels hopeless. Give us hope in Jesus Christ. Remind us that nothing can separate us from you, and the grace that you shower over us.* AMEN

**If the Lords' Prayer follows, add:*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray together, saying:

PASTORAL PRAYER (After a Vacation Bible School)

Ahead of time, jot down specific prayers of thanks for your VBS, in the space provided, as well as concerns of your community. Change details of the prayer to fit your VBS experience.

Gracious and merciful God, we come to you in prayer, knowing that you are glad to hear from us. We give you thanks, O Lord, for all of the ways that you are involved in our lives. We thank you for our Vacation Bible School, for all that was learned and the sense of community that was built.

Thank you for all of the teenagers and adults who participated in the leadership -- for their generosity, for their love for children, and for their love for you. Thank you for the leadership team, and the hours of work they lovingly gave, on your behalf.

(If you shared your VBS with another church: We are grateful for the chance that we had to share with our brothers and sisters from _____, for the friendships that were formed and for the reminder that we are part of a larger family of faith.)

We ask that you would be with the children, O God, as they assimilate Bible School into their faith memories. Help them to remember the fun they had here at church. Help them to remember the sights and sounds and tastes of a week immersed in you. Help them to remember how important they are, in our church family, and how much we care about them. And help them to remember... *(name a key teaching of your VBS)*. And so we give you thanks for this experience, and for all the ways in which it was a blessing.

As you are with us in the joys of our lives, be with us also, O Lord, in the sad and lonely times. We pray for those members of our church and our family and friends who are sick and in need of your healing touch...

We pray for those who mourn the loss of someone who was close to them...

We pray for all who struggle, here in _____, and around the world...

Hear our prayers, O Lord, those that we have shared aloud and those that are in the silent space inside of each of us. Love us and surround us with your presence. We pray in the name of Jesus*, AMEN

**If the Lords' Prayer follows, add: Who taught us what it means to be surrounded with your presence, and who taught us how to pray to you, saying...*

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

This week's texts have many wonderful opportunities for children's messages. Here are some ideas.

The Runaway Bunny (Psalm 139)

Open your Bible to Psalm 139, marked ahead of time with a big ribbon or special bookmark. Tell the children that Psalm 139 reminds you of a story. Then pull out the book *The Runaway Bunny* and read it to the children. Don't forget to show them the pictures!

This is a beloved, classic children's book. Yes, chances are they have heard it many times. But chances are they have *not* heard it in church. If you have time, draw the parallel – just like the mother bunny loves her bunny so much and will always be with him, so God loves us, and always will be with us. Or, to keep it shorter, just end with a prayer thanking God for always being with us, no matter what.

To share this story in church gives children (and their parents) the gift of a *faith overlay* on top of a favorite story. Don't have a copy? Borrow one from your library. Better yet, borrow one from a church family who has small children. Even better yet, purchase one and keep it handy for when you need to talk to kids about God's love.

Jacob's Ladder (Genesis 28)

Bring in a pillow and a large, flat rock. If you don't happen to have such a rock in your yard or on the church property, go to a local creek or river. Kids (and grown-ups) love the idea that Jacob used a rock under his head like we might use a pillow. Have fun with this contrast by asking – *Which would you rather rest your head on, at night?* Then tell the story of Jacob's dream.

No time to obtain a large rock? Just ask how many of the kids have ever had a dream. Say: *Dreams are usually just stories that our minds make up while we're sleeping. Sometimes, in the Bible, God speaks to someone through their dream. Let me tell you about a dream that Jacob had.*

After the Children's Message, while they are leaving the sanctuary or finding their way back to their families, play an instrumental version of *We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*.

We're in God's Family (Romans 8)

A Children's Message is an important time for the kids to get to know you. A simple message can be built around sharing a photo (& story) of some members of your family. Tell them that this is your family – but that *they* are also part of your family. And so are the grown-ups sitting in the pews. And so are Christians around the world. We are *all* part of God's family!

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP:

Scripture Presentation (All Four Texts)

Make one of your scripture readings come alive. Choose an idea that is appropriate to your worship style and your community. Try something new! It's summer – a great time to experiment.

GENESIS 28:10-19a

- Tell this story as your Children's Message, so you can contrast having a stone or a pillow as a place to rest your weary head.
- Bring in a large flat stone (from a creek or river) to have as a visual focus. Hold it up during your introduction.
- Use Dramatic Movement. (See p. 11)
- Share as a Scripture Litany. (See p. 12)
- Play a gentle, instrumental version of *We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder* to accompany the scripture reading, or as a response. Or, sing this song after the reading.

PSALM 139:1-12, 23-24

- Use a Scripture Echo Reading – an interweaving of 3 voices echoing the text. The script is available at www.ScriptureEcho.com/Psalms.htm. These beautiful, reassuring words deserve to be read (and heard) over and over again. A rehearsal takes about an hour. (This is not just an option for blended and contemporary worship! Many Scripture Echo readings have been shared in Traditional Sunday morning services with success.)
- Give the scripture reader a wireless microphone. At two points during the reading, have them walk to a different vantage point to read. (After verse 6 and after verse 12. Or, with gentle, instrumental background music playing during transitions, move to a different place after verses 7, 8, 9, 11 & 23. Give worshippers a chance to intersperse the scripture with their own thoughts and feelings.)
- If your setting is small enough, invite 10 readers to share this text, each taking a verse or two. Have them stand around the perimeter of the congregation, facing in, encircling them. Give each reader a verse, doubling up on verses 10-11 & 23-24.
- **Reader's Note:** If you use the NRSV or NIV version, take care to alliterate carefully "is as" in verse 12. It's hard for someone just hearing these words to understand them if they are read at a normal speed. Slow down and annunciate. "Darkness is as light to you."

ROMANS 8:12-25

- Verses 15b-17 & verses 19-21 are each an extremely long sentence. Make it easy for listeners to hear and absorb the words by reading more slowly and articulating carefully. Consider printing this passage in the bulletin (or projecting it on your screen), so listeners can see and hear the words.

MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43

- If you've focused on the Parable of the Sower last week, and used seeds and gardening tools, etc., as a visual focus, keep them there for the Parable of the Weeds.

GENESIS 28: Dramatic Movement

This simple, but powerful dramatic portrayal of Jacob's dream will help to enliven this scripture story.

Ahead of time: Invite someone to portray Jacob, dressed in biblical costume or dressed all in black. Obtain a large flat stone. (A creek or riverbed is a great source). A rehearsal should take just a short time.

As the scripture is being read, Jacob does the following:

Verse 10: Walks from one side of the front of your worship space to the other side.

Verse 12: Yawns, stretches. Takes the rock and places it in the spot where he will lie down. Lies down. Puts head on rock. Closes eyes, as if sleeping.

(If your worship space doesn't allow for Jacob to lie down (that is, if he won't be seen), have him recline on a chair, holding the rock for a pillow, as if lying down.)

Verse 16: Wakes. Sits up. Looks around in worshipful wonder.

Verse 17: Places hands crossed on chest. Leans back slightly in awe, still looking around.

Verse 18: Stands up. Reaches down to move stone slightly. Pantomimes pouring oil on the stone. Stands up, hands at side, slightly forward, palms open. Looks up.

**"SURELY THE LORD
IS IN THIS PLACE."**

GENESIS 28:16

This statement Jacob made in response to his divine dream is one highlight of this week's lectionary texts.

"Surely the Presence of the Lord," by Lanny Wolfe, is a beautiful prayer refrain that can be sung many times through.

Use the song at any point in your service, perhaps in conjunction with the scripture reading. Then segue into a prayer that begins with: *Surely, you are present with us, Lord...*

Ideas:

1. Play an instrumental version of this song, then sing, then pray.
2. Sing. Then pray while the piano/band continues to play.
3. Sing several times through, becoming quieter each time, until you are just whispering. Then allow one minute of sheer silence. Then pray.

GENESIS 28: Scripture Litany

Interspersed Prayer Phrases, NIV

The leader reads scripture. The congregation (bold) responds in prayer. Or, you may present this Scripture Litany with two voices, one reading the text and the other leading the prayer. Scripture litanies allow the words, images and ideas from the text to inform and expand our prayer.

When Jacob reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

Gracious and loving God, help us rest deeply in you and with you.

He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

When we reach for you, O God, we find that you are already reaching for us.

There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.

You are God. God of the past, present and future. The God of all time.

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

You are with us, and will watch over us wherever we go. You will not leave us.

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

Surely, you are present in this place, O Lord, and in all the places in our lives, but sometimes we are not aware. Expand our awareness of you, O God.

He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

How awesome is any place where you are, O God.

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel.

**When we encounter, you, O God, help us to remember. Help us never to forget.
AMEN**

Congregational Contemplative Practice: Praying with Psalm 139

There are certain scriptures that lend themselves to personal prayer and introspection. Psalm 139 is one such psalm. Project a sentence up on the screen and allow time for silent meditation. (Or say the sentence aloud, so that worshippers can close their eyes.) Play gentle, instrumental background music during the prayer, if you wish. Provide blank paper for those who pray through their pen.

Say: At this time, we would like to give you time for private meditation on the first four verses of Psalm 139. We will share a sentence and then give time for you to pray to God, or think about God, or to simply just be. After about a minute, we will share another verse, again leaving time for silence. Our entire prayer will last about five minutes. Whatever happens in this time of prayer and meditation is okay. Pray or simply be present to God in the way that is right for you. Or, if you need to, just rest and relax. Know that God is with you in your resting, in your relaxing.

Suggested break-down of verses:

Slide 1: O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

Slide 2: You know when I sit down and when I rise up.

Slide 3: You discern my thoughts from far away.

Slide 4: You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Slide 5: Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord,
you know it completely.

Slide 6: Amen

Interactive Worship: Discerning God's Presence

Project this verse and this question on the screen.

“Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it.” Genesis 28:16

Think back over the last week. How was God present with you in a place (or situation) that you didn't realize at the time?

OPTIONS:

1. Discussing in Partners: Ask the congregation to find a partner to discuss this question. Let them know how many minutes they have ahead of time, and then alert them when you are half-way through the time, so that both partners have an opportunity to share.

To make it interesting: Divide the congregation into 7 groups (yes, this might be challenging, but you can do it. They don't have to be even groups.) Give each group a day of the week. How was God present with you last Monday? Etc.

2. Creative Faith Response: Give each person a small square of paper. Make sure pens/pencils are available to each person. Ask them to take a few minutes to respond to this question through their imagination. Give some suggestions:

- Doodle a picture.
- Write a poem-start.
- Write all around the paper, in different directions.
- Write with their non-dominant hand. (This wakes up the right brain.)

Suggest that they not think, just create, and trust that God will work through their imagination. If you have time and are in a small setting, invite a few people to share. Or, share in partners.

Important Note: Many adults are still recovering from being told that they are not creative or have no imagination. Even a simple suggestion like this one can be unnerving. Be gentle when suggesting a creative exercise. Make it fun and as non-threatening as you can, to help people relax. Give lots of suggestions and encouragement.

Contemporary Worship: Music & Image

By Contributing Writer. Dan Snyder

Contemporary Image Ideas for Projection Background (Stills)

Romans 8

Google Search: Runner Finish Line
(or other events - shot put, rowing, cycling, etc.)
Google Search: Glory
Google Search: Clouds Heavens

Psalms 139

Google Search: Mother Kissing Baby
Google Search: Kids Exploring
Google Search: Overhead View People

Contemporary Worship Song Ideas

Above All (Lenny Leblanc, 1999 Hosanna)
All I Can Say (David Crowder, 1998 independent label)
He Knows My Name (Tommy Walker, 1996)
I Have to Believe (Rita Springer, 2005 Floodgate Records)
I Will Rise (Chris Tomlin, 2008 Sixsteprecords)
It is Well (Kutless, 2009 Bec Records/EMD)
Psalms 139 (Rebecca St. James, 2003 Forefront)
Who Am I? (Casting Crowns, 2003 Reunion)

Contemporary Videos

John Piper Resource on Romans 8
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xwu272eeyOY&feature=related>>

He Knows My Name (iWorship Video) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkw3a4raWfg>>

Technical Tip:

When using a video clip, try to keep it between 2 and 3 minutes (5 at the very most).

Also, be sure the quality of the picture is excellent (preview it on the main screen first).

Videos from websites like YouTube can be downloaded to your computer or "storage device" through <http://www.zamzar.com>.

Simply follow the step-by-step instructions; but plan ahead - it can take a couple of hours.

**

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Quote for the Bulletin

Place a quote in the bulletin that invites readers to dwell on a particular verse that lifts up your theme or message. Or, use a quote that encourages reflection on a scripture that was not included in your service. Place it in a text box, in a spot they can easily snip and post on their refrigerator, computer monitor or dashboard. Perhaps use a different version of the Bible than you usually do.

Surely the Lord is present in this place...and I did not know it.

Genesis 28:16 NRSV

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go...

I will not leave you.

Genesis 28:15 NIV

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

Psalm 139:7-8 King James Version

Social Media

This week's *Time Magazine* reports that over 30 percent of adults feel overwhelmed by social media. Don't overwhelm your congregation, but give those who are interested a chance to interact with you and with scripture this week. Here are some ideas. Through email, Facebook, Twitter or your blog:

- Each morning, ask this question: *How was God present with you yesterday in a way that wasn't clear yesterday, but is clear today?* (Genesis 28:16)
- Invite worshippers to share their story of a time they tried to journey far away from God. Stories can be anonymously shared, since they will be quite personal. (Psalm 139)
- Did you have five points you want to make in your sermon, but only time for three? Share additional insights and pose additional questions for your congregation, as they live with the text throughout the week.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PLANNING AND YOUR LEADING.

MAY PEACE BE WITH YOU.

NOTES:

WRITTEN BY: Tracey Marx, with Dan Snyder.

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SCRIPTURE VERSIONS:

Unless otherwise noted, the NRSV version is used throughout this *Lectionary Liturgy* Document.

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ALTERNATIVE LECTIONARY TEXTS:

ISAIAH 44:6-8 AND PSALM 86:11-17 are alternate lectionary text for this Sunday.