

# August 2, 2020

## Ninth Sunday after Pentecost



### ST. JOHN

### UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

10207 Lincoln Trail  
Fairview Heights, IL  
Telephone 397-6323

**Rev. Rosemary Captain**

Prayers and Liturgy by Rev. Lavon Bayler

*Genesis 32:22-31 -- Psalm 17:1-7, 15*

*Romans 9:1-5 — Matthew 14:13-21*

#### CALL TO WORSHIP:

Come into the presence of God to be fed,  
Come to call on God, who is eager to answer.

**We gather to seek God's face.**

**Let our eyes see all that is right and true.**

Incline your ears to hear all God could teach.

Seek to experience God's steadfast love.

**We are here to receive God's blessing.**

**God is our refuge in a frightening world.**

God is near to all who call and seek.

Come to praise God and receive a blessing.

**Open all our senses to pay close attention, O God.**

**We want to renew our covenant with the living God.**

INVOCATION: (Let us pray)

We are in awe before you, O God, for you have provided for us in rich abundance. The earth is full of your provisions. There is beauty all around us from the work of your hands. You have surrounded us with people who are about us with the love of Christ. Help us, O God, to count our blessings. Point us beyond our cries and complaints that we might realize our capacity to act in your name for the safe of others. As we wrestle with issues of faith and trust, help us to risk our false security for the venture of feeding others in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

READING OF PSALM 17:1-7, 15

Listen to what's right, Lord;  
pay attention to my cry!

**Listen closely to my prayer;  
It's spoken by lips that don't lie!**

My justice comes from you;  
Let your eyes see what is right!

**You have examined my heart,  
Testing me at night.**

You've looked me over closely,  
But haven't found anything wrong.

My mouth doesn't sin.

**But these other people's deeds?  
I have avoided such violent ways by  
the command from your lips.**

My steps are set firmly on your paths;  
My feet haven't slipped.

**I cry out to you because you answer me.**

**So, tilt your ears toward me now –**

**Listen to what I'm saying!**

Manifest your faithful love in amazing ways  
because you are the one who saves those who  
take refuge in you, saving them from their  
attackers by your strong hand.

**But me? I will see your face in righteousness;**

**When I awake, I will be filled full**

**by seeing your image.**

GOSPEL READING: **Matthew 14:13-21**

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus heard about John, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. When the <sup>(3)</sup> crowds learned this, they followed him on foot from the cities. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion for them and healed those who were sick. <sup>15</sup> That evening his disciples came and said to him, "This is an isolated place and it's getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

<sup>16</sup> But Jesus said to them, "There's no need to send them away. You give them something to eat."

<sup>17</sup> They replied, "We have nothing here except five loaves of bread and two fish."

<sup>18</sup> He said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup> He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves of bread and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them and broke the loaves apart and gave them to his disciples. Then the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup> Everyone ate until they were full, and they filled twelve baskets with the leftovers. <sup>21</sup> About five thousand men plus women and children had eaten."



SERMON: **“What are you hungry for?”** This is a familiar story; the miracle of feeding so many people with so little food. Most of the time we talk about Jesus and the Disciples in the context of this story. Today I’d like to find out more about where did they come from, and most of all, why were they there? What were they searching for? What were they hungry for besides the pot-luck supper?

I have many questions but not many answers. Our gospel readings give us very brief glimpses into the lives of those who followed Jesus. In Matthew 4:25 we can read, <sup>25</sup>Large crowds followed him (Jesus) from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from the areas beyond the Jordan River.” But why did they follow him?

Imagine yourself as one of those people sitting on the grass eating fish and bread. What are you thinking? Where did you hear about this Jesus? What is the attraction?



*“I like this man, Jesus, because I can identify with this fellow Jewish person. He’s one of us. We heard that Jesus was glad to identify with the man John the Baptist, who some of us have seen. When Jesus speaks now, he repeats John’s message of repentance, and that the Kingdom of Heaven is*

*near. I don’t know what that is, but I think I can trust Jesus.*

*“Jesus is also not wishy washy when it comes to identifying with what he believes and why he believes. He is meek yet bold, silent yet strong, humble yet confident in his baptism which identifies him. Perhaps that is why I like to hear him preach.*

*“We heard that after Jesus was baptized, he went into the wilderness to be tested. We have no idea what he went through, but they say he conquered the devil. If he can defeat evil, maybe we can, too.*

*“Jesus seems to live a life of purity. We watched Jesus and know that he is genuine, not a charlatan like so many preachers who have come through my village. Jesus seems worthy of following because he lives a simple, humble life; a good example to those of us who follow him.*

*“When Jesus begins to preach it’s as if he comes into a place of spiritual darkness yet he brings brightness to us out of that place. There is just something different about Jesus!*

*“He brings light to darkness, hope to hopelessness, faith to doubt, love to hate, and life to death! Everywhere and everyone he meets sees a great difference and feels the difference when he is with them. It seems like the only way to make a difference is to be different! And he is different.*

*"I am constantly amazed at the compassion of Jesus. He is intimately involved in ministering to everyone he meets who needs help. His compassion is real, not just a "I'll be praying for you, brother" type of compassion. Jesus knows how to solve him. Right before our eyes, Jesus heals people who are ill or who have evil spirits.*

*"He seems to love everyone and his teachings are all about loving our neighbors and our enemies. Even if we have been very bad in the past, he forgives us and we have another chance at life.*

*"That's why I am here, sitting in the grass eating the bread and fish offered to us. I don't know where all this food came from, but I'm grateful. But I'm mostly hungry for more of his words."*

**Now it's your turn, people of St. John and beyond. What are you hungry for? Peace, love, knowledge, inspiration, touch, wholeness, healing.** Ask Jesus to feed you, too.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

We try to distance ourselves from you,  
Loving God, and you spread a picnic of grace,  
waving us over, with a big grin on your face.

We whisper our worries in the night,  
and you say, "You don't have to shout!"

Your compassion is spread over our brokenness  
like jam over our toast.

When we are tempted to spend our lives on all the luxuries offered the people who were fed on that day; who were they, to us by the world, Brother of the hungry, you set up a table piled high with grace, hope, peace, joy, and wonder under a big sign which reads, "Clearance! Everything 100% off!!"

When we get all in a sweat over whether or not we can meet all our self-imposed expectations, you take your bandana out of your back pocket, Spirit of peace, wiping our faces, and handing us a cup of cool water, whispering, "Relax. I've taken all that off your shoulders."

Yes, gracious God, you know when we are tired, or hungry, or thirsty and you come to meet our needs. And we are grateful.

We pray for the people of the United States as we work towards equality and civility for us all. We pray for the healthcare workers and first responders who have put their lives on the line to protect us.

And we have special prayers for the families who are dealing with loved ones who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are not able to visit them in person for support. Give strength to the sick and to those who are struggling with separation.

For these and all our petitions, we place at your feet, Great Provider, as we pray together . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR OFFERING:**

God has created a world of abundance for everyone. Yet many do not share in the bounty. Christ calls us to find sufficiency among us and to make sure that all are fed. We give as we have been blessed.

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION:** Let us pray:

Thank you, God, for all you have given to satisfy our needs. You quench our thirst and alleviate our hungers when we turn to you. You turn scarcity into plenty and give us the opportunity to help others. May our offerings proclaim your goodness and mercy. May they be devoted to extending the beloved community of your people. Keep our words and actions attuned to your will, that we may offer to all what they need from your hand.

**Amen.**

**BENEDICTION:**

Go forth, fed with the abundance of God.  
Go forth, knowing that we have been forgiven and offered salvation through Jesus Christ. Share the bread of forgiveness and the cup of salvation with others who are hungry and thirsty for God's love. Share with others the good news of the Gospel so that others may know they are loved. Amen.

**ST. JOHN PRAYER LIST:** Tom Miller, Autumn, Ginny Ganschietz, Matt Brown, Nelson Libell, Dave Seneczyn, Eric White, Lori Riess, Charles Chamberlin, Donna Isselhard, Mitch Nallie, Candy Pearce, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, Rich Schmitt, Shari Hamilton, Charlotte Watson, Becky Ballard.

With deepest  
sympathy

In hope of eternal life,  
which God, that cannot lie,  
promised before the  
world began.

Titus 1:2



**Condolences to the family and friends of Barbara Moran**, who transitioned to life eternal on July 29, 2020. Visitation will be Friday August 7 from 4-8 pm and Saturday August 8 from 10-11 am. Service at 11 am on Saturday August 8, with grave side service to follow. All at Lake View Funeral Home at 5000 North Illinois Street.

Cards may be sent to Larry, Becky, Riess and Family at 304 Turnbridge Drive, Swansea, IL 62226.

