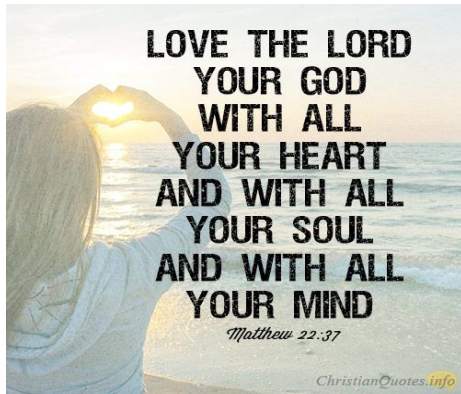


October 25, 2020

21ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



It's all about love!

St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail

Fairview Heights, IL

Telephone 397-6323

SECRETARY – JUDY HARTMANN

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Prayers and Liturgy by Rev. Lavon Bayler

ORGANIST – SHARON BANJAVCIC

ENVIRONMENTAL ARTS –

CAROL BULVA AND NANCY EISENHAUER

Lectionary Texts:

Deuteronomy 34:1-12 Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 Matthew 22:34-40

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRELUDE: Mark Hayes

“They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love”

*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

Gather together to hear stories of faith and courage.
Listen for the ways God has acted among us.

Our ancestors in the faith listened for God’s word.

They dared to believe God’s promises.

Leaders like Moses and Paul saw evidence of God’s
work. They believed they were face-to-face with
God’s truth.

They looked beyond the present moment.

They lived for dreams not yet realized.

Many felt God’s love in knowing Jesus.

They experienced a new relationship with neighbors.

We have come seeking community centered in

**Christ. We want to feel God’s presence as we
worship.**

*UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

**God, you have been our dwelling place in all
generations. Before the earth formed, long before
there were people on this planet, you were
fashioning life in myriad forms. Out of the billions
of years you have been creating, our lives have
come to this moment of meeting. We stand in awe**

before you, amazed to discover that you care about us, tiny blips on the screen of eternity. O God, we want our lives to count for something. Show us how to fit into your plans. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: **Matthew 22:34-40**

This is the Word of God.
It is true and can be trusted.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

SERMON: **“It’s All About Love”**



I have good news and bad news today. I’ll start with the bad news. The “temple police” are at it again, interrogating Jesus. They’ve tried Pharisees and Sadducees and now they are trying, what some translations

call, a “lawyer”. In those days, lawyers were not what we think as attorneys. They were more like professors, experts in the law of Moses.

The good news is that, once again, Jesus answers with great wisdom and the interrogators are left speechless.

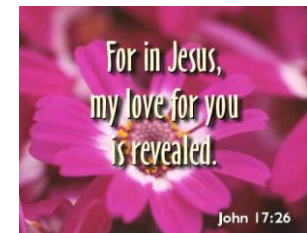
The bad news is that it didn’t seem to matter if Jesus had the right or wrong answer. The temple authorities feel threatened by Jesus and plan to execute him no matter what, and Jesus knows it.

How frustrating that must have been for Jesus? However, Jesus is not like us. I doubt if he felt frustrated in this situation. God sent him on this

journey to open the hearts and minds of all he encountered. I think Jesus knew the risks for his personal safety and he obeyed God anyway.

Let’s think about that for a minute. How many of us would do the same? Maybe some people who have professions that demand personal sacrifice, such as fire fighters, policemen, EMT’s, front-line Covid workers, doctors and nurses may make such a sacrifice. Yet I doubt they spend too much time thinking about the fact that they might die as they serve others.

Jesus knew he would face the cross, even as he shared the good news of the gospel with us. And the best news came three days later when he rose in victory. Because Jesus loved the Holy One that sent him and because he loved all of us as God’s beloved children, he obeyed God. It was all about love and for the love of all.



Praise be to the one who continues to send us good news even in the midst of bad. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: Duet: Stacie Pickens and Sharon
“Jesus Paid it All with Jesus Loves Me”
John T. Grape and William Bradbury



PASTORAL

PRAYER:

Beginning with a time of silent, personal prayer.

Eternal God, whose wisdom defies our limited insights, and whose commandments are from everlasting to everlasting, open our hearts and souls and minds to your love that surrounds us and seeks a dwelling place in us, that we may regard ourselves as your valuable children and accord the same care and concern to others as we would, at our best, lavish on ourselves.

To that end, we come before with prayers and concerns for others in our world. We pray for all those on our prayer list, that they might find comfort in knowing the Great Physician is surrounding them with love and peace. We pray for all those affected by this terrible virus; those who are ill, those who have lost loved ones, those who have lost their jobs and are struggling every day to find relief from this situation.

We pray for the front-line health care professionals carrying for others while risking their own health.

We pray for a peaceful conclusion to the elections of our government leaders. May they always listen to the people they serve and find ways to bring justice for all. May we never forget our heavenly Creator who always cares for all of us as the children of God.

Let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING: We who have been entrusted with the message of the gospel have the means to make it known to the world. Our tithes and offerings are dedicated to that purpose. As we present them, we also submit ourselves to God's purposes and direction.

DOXOLOGY: (music only)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done.
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.

UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

As we give ourselves and our offerings, we pray, O God, that they may reveal your love in such a way that many will respond. Awaken in us a love for you and for one another that is contagious. Remove from us all apathy, pretension, and greed that we may grow in holiness and compassion, living joyously in communion with you. Amen.

RESPONSIVE BENEDICTION:

Brothers and sisters, our coming together is not in vain. God is doing a new thing among us and beyond us.

We have sensed a vision of God's plan for us.

God's sign and wonders await our discovery.

God has compassion on all who seek to serve. Steadfast love is with all who continue in faithfulness.

God's glorious power is manifested in humility.

Surely God's favor rests upon us here.

Now we go out with courage, entrusted with the gospel. We carry good news of God's love to our neighbors.

We will be gentle with others as God is gentle with us. We offer tender care in the spirit of Jesus.

Amen. Amen.

POSTLUDE: "What the World Needs Now"



PRAYER LIST: Rich Schmitt, 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, Shari Hamilton, Becky Ballard, Amy Annis, Robert Iverson, Sr.

