

# September 13, 2020 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Forgive others  
as quickly as  
you expect  
God to forgive you.

## St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail

Fairview Heights, IL

Telephone 397-6323

SECRETARY – JUDY HARTMANN

Rev. Rosemary Captain 660-8894

Prayers and Liturgy by Rev. Thom Schuman

ORGANIST – SHARON BANJAVCIC

ENVIRONMENTAL ARTS –

CAROL BULVA AND NANCY EISENHAUER

ANNOUNCEMENTS: This Sunday we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper so have your "bread" and beverage handy.



Lectionary Texts:

Exodus 14:19-31; Psalm 114;  
Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

In sacred times of word, wonder, and awe,  
in ordinary days of work and play:

**in every moment, God is with us.**

Whether we are stuck in doubt's mud,  
or standing on faith's shoreline:

**in every place, God is with us.**

In those who teach us and those who trouble us;  
in those who surprise us, and those who forgive us:

**in every person, God is with us.**

CALL TO RECONCILIATION:

As we stand before God, we think of all the ways we  
bicker with others, all those times we have not  
shown mercy and grace to those around us. Let us  
bow our hearts and confess our sin to God, as we  
pray together, saying,

UNISON PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS:

**It is never easy for us to confess but deep down  
inside, we know that graced, we have trouble**

**being grace-full to others; forgiven, we are eager to judge and punish all who hurt us; freed, we find ways to put restrictions on people we fear. Forgive us, Servant God. You show mercy more often than we deserve; you pardon us more times than we can count. And why? Because we are the Lord's - sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ, who died and lived again, so we might live beyond death with you. *Silence is kept***

#### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God's hand of mercy is stretched out to us, making a way through all that threatens us, to touch us with grace and hope.

**We stand before our God, singing praise to the One who turns our despair into joy, our fears into faith. Amen.**

#### SCRIPTURE: **Matthew 18:21-35**

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus said, "Not just seven times, but rather as many as seventy-seven times.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>23</sup> Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle accounts, they brought to him a servant who owed him ten thousand bags of gold.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>25</sup> Because the servant didn't have enough to pay it back, the master ordered that he should be

sold, along with his wife and children and everything he had, and that the proceeds should be used as payment. <sup>26</sup> But the servant fell down, kneeled before him, and said, 'Please, be patient with me, and I'll pay you back.' <sup>27</sup> The master had compassion on that servant, released him, and forgave the loan.

<sup>28</sup> "When that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred coins.<sup>[c]</sup> He grabbed him around the throat and said, 'Pay me back what you owe me.'

<sup>29</sup> "Then his fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I'll pay you back.' <sup>30</sup> But he refused. Instead, he threw him into prison until he paid back his debt.

<sup>31</sup> "When his fellow servants saw what happened, they were deeply offended. They came and told their master all that happened. <sup>32</sup> His master called the first servant and said, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you appealed to me. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you also have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup> His master was furious and handed him over to the guard responsible for punishing prisoners, until he had paid the whole debt.

**35** "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you if you don't forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

## Footnotes

- a. [Matthew 18:22](#) Or *seventy times seven*
- b. [Matthew 18:24](#) Or *ten thousand talanta*, an amount equal to the wages for sixty million days
- c. [Matthew 18:28](#) Or *one hundred denaria*, an amount equal to the wages for one hundred days

## SERMON: “Judging Worth”

As humans, we judge the worth of things. Is that head of lettuce really worth what is being charged? Is that new car I want to buy worth the price on the sticker? Is that charity worth my donation? Is that book worthy of my time to read?

Judging the worth of those types of things are helpful. The problem comes when we judge the worth of people, especially people who have hurt us; perhaps by cheating us, or by insulting us. Are those people worthy of my forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a subject many people do not like to discuss, perhaps because forgiveness can be very hard to do. As humans, I believe we have a tendency to judge who is worthy of forgiveness, and that can be a stumbling block for following what Jesus is telling us to do. Jesus taught the disciples to forgive seventy-seven times, in other words, forgive more times than can be counted.

Sometimes forgiving someone is easier than at other times. If someone takes the parking spot you had your eye on, you can forgive them and find

another spot. But what about forgiving those who kill children in their school, or shoot people as they worship? How do we forgive those people?

From the cross Jesus said “Father forgive them (all of us) for they know not what they are doing.” Perhaps these words are a clue for us to help when we think we can not forgive; ask our heavenly Father to forgive those people who we consider as being unworthy of forgiveness. After all, God is the final judge for all of us. Will God judge **US** worthy of forgiveness? Amen.

## PASTORAL PRAYER:

When we look over our shoulders at fear shadowing us today, you, dear God, go before us into tomorrow, making a path through the sea of yesterday's doubts. When our legs tremble from the effort of standing up for what you hope for all creation, you are at our side, offering your heart's strength to us.

Cloud of Grace, we offer our love to you.

When we turn our hearts into deserts of stony bitterness, you transform them into oases of joy. When we come up with all sorts of rules for those who come to us seeking to find you, you tear up the list, stretching wide your arms in welcoming grace.

Servant of all, we offer our lives to you.

When we would clasp old worries to our hearts, you open our eyes to that hope which paves the path ahead of us. When we spend each day consumed with doubts and fears, you remind us

that this day is the time to honor God, by serving God's children.

Mist of Mercy, we offer our hearts to you.

We pray for all those on our prayer list, that they may know you are with them through whatever storm they are experiencing. We pray for those suffering from Covid, those who are ill, those who are unemployed, those who care for those in critical condition. And we pray for our church. May we heed the words of our Savior as we care for others.

We pray the words Jesus taught us . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. The 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:

UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

**We have a variety of intentions for offering these gifts to you, Loving God, but whatever the reason, whatever might be our purpose, we trust you will use them to bring healing to brokenness, hope to despair, and welcome to the forgotten. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.**

## HOLY COMMUNION

May the God of hope be with you!

**And also with you!**

God, our God, leads us through the flood of fears into the future of wonder and hope.

**We open our hearts to the One who journeys with us, in the past, in the present, into tomorrow.**

God goes before us, preparing the Table piled high with grace and peace.

**We sing songs of glad thanksgiving to the One who fills us with goodness and mercy.**

You stretched out your hand, Cloud of Glory, parting a way through chaos, so your goodness might come forth.

You looked, and laughed out loud, as seas ran forth in joy mountains played leapfrog, and hills hopscotched with valleys.

Creation became a sanctuary for those created in your image. But we decided to live for ourselves, every day becoming one in which we could turn your dreams to ashes, your overflowing love into dust bowls of despair.

Out of pity, you sent the prophets, those pillars of faithfulness, but we wrangled with their gentle words. So, you sent Jesus, to lead us through evil's deeps, to that freedom found only in your kingdom of life.

Therefore, on this day, when we stand in your grace around your Table of life, we join our voices with all who offer praise to the One who saves:

**Living, we serve others in God's name;  
serving, we die unto ourselves;  
dying, we are given life eternal with God.**

**Blessed is the One who comes forgiving us more times than we can count. Hosanna in the highest!**

Holy are you, Cloud of Joy, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Servant. When we were weak in faith, he came to strengthen us with your everlasting hope; when we were slaves to sin, he came to lead us into the promised land of mercy; when our hearts became like flint, he softened them with compassion; when we could only focus on ourselves, he came to die for us.

As we gather at your Table, we remember his love for us, his patience with our failings, his hope in our willingness to follow, his trust in that mystery we call faith:

**Baptized in Christ, we would live for him;  
forgiven through Christ, we would emulate him;  
putting on Christ, we wait for his return.  
Alleluia! Amen!**

Creator God, send your Spirit in peace upon us and these simple gifts of the bread and of the cup.

*(Lift up the bread)*

As we share the bread, we share the presence of Christ, strengthened to go out with forgiveness in our hearts.

*(Lift up the juice)*

As we partake of the cup, we share Christ's Spirit with our neighbors, and are called to welcome all as our sisters and brothers, especially those held captive by the bitterness of the world.

As you gathered your children to lead them to that promised land, so you will bring all your children from the very ends of time itself, to seat us around your heart, where we will feast on your grace, lifting our hearts to praise you forever:

God our Maker,  
Christ our Brother,  
Spirit our Compassion,  
one God, now and forever. Amen.

*(Place your hands, palm side down, above the elements.)* Holy Spirit, we ask you to bless this bread and this cup. Through this meal, make us the body of Christ, that we may join with you in promoting the well-being of all creation. Amen.

*(Partake of the elements)*

**UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: Bountiful God,  
we give you thanks that you have refreshed us at  
your table by granting us the presence of Christ.  
Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one**

**another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

RESPONSIVE BENEDICTION:

In every person, God is with us.

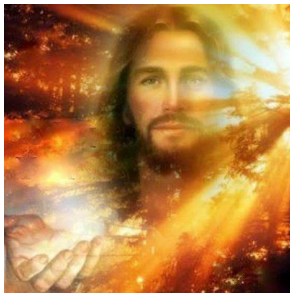
**We will welcome God in the family we know all too well, and in the strangers we will meet in the coming days.**

In every choice, Jesus is with us.

**We will welcome the Christ who serves us unexpectedly, and in those who will offer us forgiveness.**

In every moment, the Spirit is with us.

**We will welcome the Spirit who calls us to live as well as calling us to give of ourselves without question.**



**ST. JOHN PRAYER LIST:** Rich Schmitt, Tom Petroff, Hunter Brink, 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, Charlotte Watson, Becky Ballard.

(If there are names on this list that you believe can be removed, call the church secretary.)

**ISC Prayer list for Sept 13 - Sept 19, 2020 Churches & Pastors**

- Godfrey Evangelical UCC, Rev. Jerald (Lori) McCaskey
- Granite City St. John UCC, Rev. Karla (Rev. Charles Preston) Frost

**Retired Pastor**

- Rev. W. Curtis and Martha Lee, Newburgh, IN