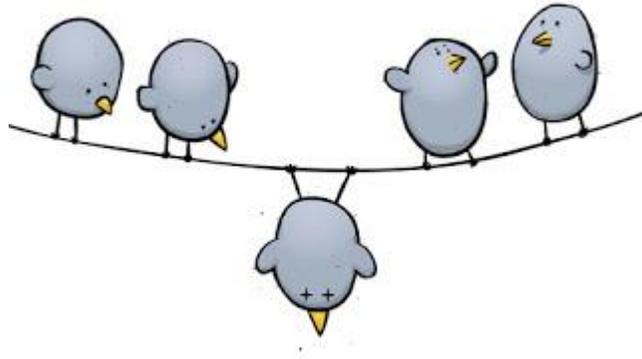


Second Sunday after Pentecost June 6, 2021



Jesus as an “other”

St. John United Church of Christ
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Secretary – Judy Hartman
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Prayers and Liturgy by
Rev. Susan A. Blain
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IT IS COMMUNION SUNDAY.

**HAVE YOUR ELEMENTS HANDY.
WORDS OF WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

PRELUDE: “They’ll Know We are Christians by Our Love”
Mark Hayes

***CALL TO WORSHIP:** *Based on Psalm 138, The Message*
Come, let us worship our God with joy and thanksgiving:
Everything in us says

Thank you!

At worship in this sacred place, we say it again:

Thank you!

For your love, for your faithfulness;

Thank you!

When earth’s rulers hear what you have to say, O GOD,
They’ll sing of what you’ve done:

How great the glory of GOD!

Finish what you started in us, GOD.

Your love is eternal—stay with us, now, that we may say

Thank you!

CALL TO CONFESSION: *(from 1 Samuel 8: 4-11)*

Leadership and governance is on everyone’s mind these days. Competing visions of the common good strive for our attention. Like the people of Israel in today’s text, we may be tempted to seek rulers whose ways are not the ways of God. *(silence)*

LITANY OF CONFESSION:

When we forget that God's ways lead all to the blessings of justice and mercy:

Lord have mercy.

When we forget that God's ways lead all, especially the most vulnerable, to blessings of safety, health, meaningful work:

Christ have mercy.

When we forget that God's ways lead all to the blessings of the shared abundance of God's beloved creation:

Lord have mercy.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON: *(from Mark 3: 34-35)*

Jesus reminds us: "Who is my mother, and who are my sisters and brothers?"

All those who do the will of God are my brother and sister and mother."

In Christ we are forgiven all our failed efforts at community, and invited afresh to rejoin the family of God, seeking blessing for all. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI: Music only

Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

HYMN: "Called as Partners in Christ's Service" NCH 495**SCRIPTURE: Mark 3:20-35**

²⁰ Jesus entered a house. A crowd gathered again so that it was impossible for him and his followers even to eat. ²¹ When his family heard what was happening, they came to take control of him. They were saying, "He's out of his mind!"

²² The legal experts came down from Jerusalem. Over and over they charged, "He's possessed by Beelzebul. He throws out demons with the authority of the ruler of demons."

²³ When Jesus called them together, he spoke to them in a parable: "How can Satan throw Satan out? ²⁴ A kingdom involved in civil war will collapse. ²⁵ And a house torn apart by divisions will collapse. ²⁶ If Satan rebels against himself and is divided, then he can't endure. He's done for. ²⁷ No one gets into the house of a strong person and steals anything without first tying up the strong person. Only then can the house be burglarized. ²⁸ I assure you that human beings will be forgiven for everything, for all sins and insults of every kind. ²⁹ But whoever insults the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. That person is guilty of a sin with consequences that last forever." ³⁰ He said this because the legal experts were saying, "He's possessed by an evil spirit."

³¹ His mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside and sent word to him, calling for him. ³² A crowd was seated around him, and those sent to him said, "Look, your mother, brothers, and sisters are outside looking for you."

³³ He replied, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” ³⁴ Looking around at those seated around him in a circle, he said, “Look, here are my mother and my brothers. ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother, sister, and mother.”

These are the Ancient Words given to us
so that we may hear them anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “Jesus as the ‘Other’”

(With thoughts from William Barclay)

For the next 6 weeks we will be reading from the Gospel of Mark. Mark is believed to be the first gospel written because the Gospels of Matthew and Luke have passages copied from Mark.

The author of the Gospel of Mark frequently uses a literary technique of putting a story within a story. He starts with one story, but before finishing that story, he begins and ends another story, and eventually coming back to the original story to finish it. This is sometimes called a “sandwich” technique. Today we have just that type of passage. Let’s concentrate on the first story verses 20-21, and the end of that story verses 31-35.

²⁰ Jesus entered a house. A crowd gathered again so that it was impossible for him and his followers even to eat. ²¹ When his family heard what was happening, they came to take control of him. They were saying, “He’s out of his mind!”

I’ve always had questions about this story. If you’ve ever raised children, I’m sure there were times when they drove you crazy or the other way around. But thinking Jesus was “out of his mind” is something else entirely. (Even today we don’t like people who are not, what we think of as, normal. “People who are different must be evil!” “The Other must be avoided.”)

Why would the family believe Jesus needed an intervention? Let’s see if we can understand what made them feel like that. #1 Jesus has left home and the carpenter’s business at Nazareth. No doubt it was a flourishing business from which he could at least have made a living; and quite suddenly he gave the whole thing up and had gone out to be a wondering preacher. No one with any sense, they must have been thinking, would throw up a business where the money came in every week to become a vagrant who had nowhere even to sleep.

#2 Jesus was obviously on the way to a head-on collision with the orthodox leaders of his day. The family must have thought that no one could take on the scribes and the Pharisees and the orthodox leaders and hope to get away with it.

#3 Jesus had newly started a little society of his own and a very strange society it was. There were some fishermen; there was a reformed tax-collector; there was a fanatical nationalist. They were not the kind of people whom anyone with career ambitions would particularly want to know. Jesus’ family must have been thinking, “How could anyone pick a crowd of friends like that?” They were

definitely not the kind of people a prudent person would want to get mixed up with.

By his actions Jesus had made it clear that the three laws by which most people tend to organize their lives meant nothing to him. #1 He had thrown away security. The one thing that most people in this world want more than anything else is just that. They want a job and a position which is secure, and where there are as few material and financial risks as possible. #2 Jesus had thrown away safety. Most people tend at all times to play safe. They are more concerned with the safety of any course of action than with its moral quality, its rightness or its wrongness. A course of action which involves risk is something from which they instinctively shrink. #3 Jesus had shown himself utterly indifferent to the verdict of society. He had shown that he did not much care what people said about him. For most of us the question is, “what will people say?”

What appalled Jesus’ friends was the risks that he was taking, risks which, as they thought, no one with any sense would take. As we see, Jesus was not like most people. He did things and said things that were risky to his well-being and life. Jesus was definitely what we would call “an Other.”

³¹ His mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside and sent word to him, calling for him. ³² A crowd was seated around him, and those sent to him said, “Look, your mother, brothers, and sisters are outside looking for you.”

³³ He replied, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” ³⁴ Looking around at those seated around him in a circle, he said, “Look, here are my mother and my brothers. ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother, sister, and mother.”

Here Jesus lays down the conditions of true kinship. It is not solely a matter of flesh and blood. Sometimes we can be closer to a non-relative, instead of our blood relation. So, what is “true kinship?”

Briefly, there are four characteristics of true kinship. See if you agree. #1 True kinship lies in a common experience, especially when it is an experience where two people have really come through things together, good things or bad. #2 True kinship lies in a common interest. Christians have a common interest because they are all people who desire to know more about Jesus Christ. #3 True kinship lies in a common obedience. The disciples were a very mixed group. All kinds of beliefs and opinions were mixed up among them. (Sounds like a church in our day.) But they were bound together because they were following Jesus. #4 True kinship lies in a common goal. Sometimes church people get preoccupied with rules, regulations, rituals, sacraments, and what type of government the church should have. They forget what their common goal should be; to remain closer to God and to bring others along. If kinship comes from a common goal, then Christians above all others, possess its secret for all are seeking to know Christ better and to bring people within Jesus’ kingdom. Wherever else we differ, on that we can agree.

At first Jesus' words seem rude and disrespectful in this passage, but he was trying to make a point. Jesus is offering to us a different way to be family; not leaving anyone out, but bringing all of us together in a sacred kinship. It is risky and dangerous. Not many of us would do that. Jesus is definitely different than most people. That is why Jesus is "**an Other**". Should we ignore him or embrace this Other? Amen.

MUSIC: "Who is my Mother, Who is my Brother" video

PASTORAL PRAYER: Blessed Jesus, we are so very grateful that you have invited us to be part of your kinship. Your love and compassion have drawn us in and now we respond to this invitation by sharing this love and compassion with others. Thank you for this opportunity.

Today we pray for all those on our prayer list and all those who feel lost and abandoned. Help us shine your light on them, Son of God. We pray for those on our prayer list and all those who are in pain, suffering, and lonely. We pray for the soul of our dear friend, Ruth Ogles. I'm sure we greeted warmly into your arms.

We may feel ill-equipped and self-conscious, yet we ask for opportunities to share what we have learned from you with others. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us when we feel we can't open our mouths to spread the good news of the Gospel. We love you and we want others to love you, too. We can pray the prayer you sent us. It's a start.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today 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.

CALL TO OFFERING: *(from 2 Corinthians 4: 13-15)*

St Paul writes of confidence in the power of God revealed in the resurrection of Jesus that must underlie a life of faithfulness and generosity: "I believed, and so I spoke".

Today, let us believe, and give with generosity that God's goodness may be known in the world.

DOXOLOGY:

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.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

Generous God, take our gifts this day and use them so that we may be part of your great work in this world. Through our giving, bring justice and love closer to all, not just in our community but in the world beyond these walls. Strengthen our church and the whole United Church of Christ so that we grow together each day into a powerful voice for healing and peace. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION:

Invitation

Come, you who are waiting,
from the depths of sorrow and pain,
or the heights of joy.

Come, you who've waited,
for a graduation like it used to be,
a memorial service to say good-bye,
a church service to be
something different from what it is –
a gathering with passing the peace,
singing the hymns,
easy interaction with children.

Come, from personal waiting for a job
or a day off, to get pregnant without fears,
or to meet friends for a night out,
and from the community waiting
that is in the atmosphere, in the strangeness
as we want and fear personal contact.

Our souls wait for God,
more than those who watch for the morning,
and, as light comes, God is here.

Words of Remembering

We remember a time Jesus was at table,
but life was so complex and confusing,
he and his followers

didn't have a chance to eat.

We have been confused like that.

We remember a time Jesus' family
was so worried for him
they wanted to take him far away
from all choices and risks,
to remove him both from danger
and from people he loved.

We have felt torn apart like that.

We remember Jesus opened up family
to mean those sitting that table
as well as precious ones from the past.

We have learned in these days
of virtual family, masked family,
essential family, six-foot-away family,
church family,
that every one has heard,
as at the Passover table,
when he blended loved ones together –

This is my Body broken for you,
this, here and now and always,
the Cup of the new covenant.

Words of Reconciliation and Prayer of Consecration

The psalmist knows that when we wait on God from our
depths, we begin to name for ourselves all that we have

done which we truly wish we had not done, all that we are complicit with and do not challenge, all that we have left unsaid and undone which could have made a difference in the lives of God's children. We know that God does not mark up against us our regrets, but forgives us fully. And we know that if the expectations of our lives are swept away, we have a table from God, a meal not made with hands, that feeds us hope and steadfast love.

(If your elements of Communion are with you, rest your hands lightly upon them. If they are in the front of the church, open your hands to be sacramental, filled with the power to change your heart of and the world. We ask God's grace on us and on all those who are in our prayers this morning and God's blessing on our elements and our hands.)

Unison

God, in whose open hand we place our own, whether we have met you long ago or in this very moment, we pray that you send your Spirit of life and blessing upon all of us gathered anywhere, in any way, so that this Bread may be broken and received in love and this Cup poured out to give the world hope. Risen Christ, as you have faith in us, may we have faith in you. Breathe in us, that we may breathe in you. Amen.

Sharing of the Elements

Leader: We are welcome to this gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

Unison: We are Christ's family in the Bread we share.

Leader: We are welcome to this gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

Unison: We are Christ's family in the Cup we share.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: Let us pray in thanksgiving for this meal of new covenant, rejoicing that we have embodied the love of the family of Christ's available on every human table, never hoarded for "family first," but wide as grace itself.

Spirit of Christ, you have blessed our hands and our hearts. May this family loaf give us courage to speak faith and act love, not only in places set aside, but in your precious world, and may drinking deeply renew our covenant with all life. Wrap your hopeful presence around all whose bodies, spirits and hearts need healing, and let us live your compassion in the days to come. Amen

BENEDICTION: Finish what you started in us, GOD. Your love is eternal—go with us, now, into the world, that we may say Thank you!

POSTLUDE: "Festive Voluntary" Henry Purcell

PRAYER LIST: We pray for the health and well-being of all affected by the pandemic and we especially pray for:
Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Nelson Libell, Joe Knapp, Jim Garrett, Ronald Bopp (husband of Pastor's friend), Agnes Doctolero.



NEXT SUNDAY, JUNE 13 10AM

WE WILL HAVE A HYMN SING IN THE CHURCH'S BACKYARD. BRING YOUR LAWN CHAIRS AND JOIN US.

THERE WILL BE A SHORT SEMI-ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TO FOLLOW.