

NOVEMBER 14, 2021
25TH Sunday in Pentecost



“Once and for all”

St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights, IL
397-6323

Rev. Rosemary Captain
Organist - Sharon Banjavcic
Liturgy - Rev. Quentin Chin
Ushers - Jan and Tom Miller

*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in **bold** print
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***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:** *(based upon Hebrews 10:22-25)*

One: Come into this time of worship by the new and living way in Christ Jesus.

Many: We come with true hearts in full assurance of our faith.

Come with joyful expectation.

We gather in full confidence of the gospel's promise.

Let us praise God together and open ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit

That we may encourage and support each other to love our neighbors as ourselves and to be God's instruments of grace.

***UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

In you, O God, we find refuge from our turbulent world. We work each day to bear witness to your justice through our ministries. While the journey towards true peace that lies ahead is long, our incremental steps continue to take us closer to that **promised day. Renew in us the strength, faith, and courage we need to persevere so that the promised day will come when your will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.**

***GLORIA PATRI: NCH 759**

**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.**

EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 10:11-25

¹¹ Every priest (Jewish) stands every day serving and offering the same sacrifices over and over, sacrifices that can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest (Jesus) offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right side of God. ¹³ Since then, he's waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for his feet, ¹⁴ because he perfected the people who are being made holy with one offering for all time.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit affirms this when saying,

¹⁶ *This is the covenant that I will make with them.*

*After these days, says the Lord,
I will place my laws in their hearts
and write them on their minds.*

¹⁷ *And I won't remember their sins
and their lawless behavior anymore.*^[a]

¹⁸ When there is forgiveness for these things, there is no longer an offering for sin.

¹⁹ Brothers and sisters, we have confidence that we can enter the holy of holies by means of Jesus' blood, ²⁰ through a new and living way that he opened up for us through the curtain, which is his body, ²¹ and we have a great high priest over God's house.

²² Therefore, let's draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us, since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water.

²³ Let's hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable.

²⁴ And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. ²⁵ Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.

MESSAGE: "Once and for all"

The author of the book of Hebrews is unknown. However, scholars do believe it was written about 60 AD. At that time new churches of Jewish Believers were beginning to pop up. This letter was written to help them understand the difference between Temple priests and Jesus. This teaching was started

way back in chapter 4, verse 12. *(For a better understanding of this lesson, read Hebrews 4:12-16, 5:1-10, 7:23-28, 9:11-14, 9:24-28, 10:1-10).*

It must have been very difficult for the Jews who believed in Jesus, yet wanted to remain in the synagogue. We must remember that Jesus came to reform the Jewish religion; not destroy it. However, where do the people draw the line between Christianity and Judaism?

Perhaps it could be as if you had a favorite restaurant, you visited frequently. You love the food and the people. And then one day a friend took you to a new restaurant where the food and the service was much better. You love the new place, yet you yearn to return to the old place because that's where you think you belong.

Today's reading is finishing the discussion of how the Jesus is "better" than the Jewish priests concerning forgiveness of sins. The practice for Jews who sinned was to buy an animal to sacrifice on the altar in the Temple. If you couldn't afford to buy an animal, you could not be forgiven for your sins.

(Remember when Jesus cleared the Temple of money changers and vendors selling animals to sacrifice? Jesus knew this practice only cheated the people and put more money into the pockets of the priests. It had nothing to do with forgiveness of sins.

Yet the people had been taught by these priests that it did. And the people had to do it over and over again, if they thought they had not followed all the laws of their faith.)

The author of Hebrews is trying to convince the people that there is a different way, the way of Jesus. Reread verses 11-14. Jesus perfected the people who were being made holy with one offering for all time. The author even quotes Jeremiah, one of the ancient prophets. "I will place my laws (God's laws, not man-made rules) in their hearts and write them on their minds. And I won't remember their sins and their lawless behavior anymore." "Where there is forgiveness for these things, there is no longer an offering for sin."

So, what changed? How could people's sins be forgiven once and for all? **BECAUSE JESUS WAS THE SACRIFICE FOR ALL OUR SINS, ONCE AND FOR ALL. JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE, INSTEAD OF BUYING A BULL TO SLAUGHTER ON THE ALTAR IN THE TEMPLE.**

If we believe in Jesus Christ and what he did for us, we can confess our sins to him and we are forgiven. Once and for all. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time of silent, personal prayer.

Our gracious and ever-loving God, you sent your Son to teach us so many things; how to love God and others; how to treat others. Yet if we fail, your Son is there to hear our confession and forgive our sins. That is a gift we treasure and we are grateful.

We are grateful for all of creation that you gave us to take care. We stiff necked people are trying to do better for our earth and nurture it so that it may be preserved forever.

Be merciful to us as we stumble. We hear or read ways to behave that don't seem "Christian". We don't know who to trust. Once again, we need to return to your teaching of love. If an action does not seem for love, it's not yours. Be merciful to us as we try to shut out all the noise and listen quietly to our hearts and to you.

We pray for all those on our prayer list and we send love to each one of them, even if we don't know them. All these things we pray as we continue to learn and relearn your lessons for us.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed it be your 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.

***BENEDICTION:**

What endures is not the edifices we build, but the work of God that we accomplish through our ministries in the name of Christ Jesus. Let us go forth from here empowered by the Holy Spirit to further the work of Jesus and to move us closer to God's reign of peace.