

October 17, 2021 - 10:00 am
21st Sunday after Pentecost



“Learning something new”

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

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Organist - Sharon Banjavcic

Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP (*Mark 10:35-45*)

One: We may come here for a glimpse of glory,

Many: **But Jesus asks us: “Can you drink the cup that I drink?”**

The cup of Jesus’ own life: struggle and joy; suffering and hope. Fullness of life! We may come here to get

close to Jesus,

And Jesus asks us: “Can you be baptized with my baptism?”

Baptized into the reign of God, where the Spirit breaks down barriers among all people and creates new relationships! We may come here for honor or fame,

But Jesus challenges us: “To become great you must serve!”

Why are we here?

To drink the cup of fullness of life;

To immerse ourselves in Jesus’ struggle for justice and peace;

To learn how to serve so that the world may be healed.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF INVOCATION (*Psalm 91:9-16; Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c*)

Holy Dwelling Place, Your tent is wide enough to provide shelter for all who seek you, food for all who hunger, and healing for all who suffer.

Meet us here today, and fill us with confidence in your presence, that we may risk sharing Jesus’ cup and his baptism so the world may become the place of love and justice you desire for all.

Shelter us with your light, and clothe us with your heavenly garments.

Teach us how we may best serve ourselves and one another on this daring adventure. Amen.

EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 5:1-10

from “The Message”

5 ¹⁻³ Every high priest selected to represent men and women before God and offer sacrifices for their sins should be able to deal gently with their failings, since he knows what it’s like from his own experience. But that also means that he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as the peoples’.

⁴⁻⁶ No one elects himself to this honored position. He’s called to it by God, as Aaron was. Neither did Christ presume to set himself up as high priest, but was set apart by the One who said to him, “You’re my Son; today I celebrate you!” In another place God declares, “You’re a priest forever in the royal order of Melchizedek.”

⁷⁻¹⁰ While he lived on earth, anticipating death, Jesus cried out in pain and wept in sorrow as he offered up priestly prayers to God. Because he honored God, God answered him. Though he was God’s Son, he learned trusting-obedience by what he suffered, just as we do. Then, having arrived at the full stature of his maturity and having been announced by God as high priest in the order of Melchizedek, he became

the source of eternal salvation to all who believingly obey him.

***GOSPEL READING: Mark 10:35-45**

³⁵ James and John, Zebedee’s sons, came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷ They said, “Allow one of us to sit on your right and the other on your left when you enter your glory.”

³⁸ Jesus replied, “You don’t know what you’re asking! Can you drink the cup I drink or receive the baptism I receive?”

³⁹ “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said, “You will drink the cup I drink and receive the baptism I receive, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left hand isn’t mine to give. It belongs to those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹ Now when the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the ones who are considered the rulers by the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around. ⁴³ But that’s not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant. ⁴⁴ Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all, ⁴⁵ for the Human

One didn't come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people."

May the ancient words speak to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "Learning Something New" Before I begin, I want to add two passages that came right before the Gospel we had today. Mark 10:32-34.

³² Jesus and his disciples were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, with Jesus in the lead. The disciples were amazed while the others following behind were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he told them what was about to happen to him. ³³ "Look!" he said. "We're going up to Jerusalem. The Human One will be handed over to the chief priests and the legal experts. They will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ They will ridicule him, spit on him, torture him, and kill him. After three days, he will rise up."

Jesus had just announced to the disciples how he will be tortured and die. And then we have today's passages. Jesus will die but the disciples are arguing over who will sit next to Jesus when he comes into his glory. It's as if the Disciples didn't hear a word

Jesus said. Or if they did, their response was very insensitive.

Perhaps you have heard that scholars observe that in the Gospel of Mark, the author treats the disciples like they were a bunch of bumpkins with no brains. At least in the Gospel of Matthew, this same story is told from their mother's perspective. It is the mother of these two disciples who is the one to ask Jesus for her sons to receive places of honor. Having the mother ask takes some of the sting off of the passage we just read in Mark.

I can think of two reasons why the author of Mark describes these 12 men, who were chosen to learn from the greatest teacher of all time, as unable to grasp the concepts Jesus was teaching. The first reason the disciples are treated like poor students is so Jesus can explain these concepts more thoroughly. You might notice that when Jesus teaches the crowds, he then asks the disciples if they understood what he was trying to convey. They did not understand so Jesus had to instruct them privately. This gives you and I the opportunity to "listen in" on Jesus' more thorough lectures. I find that to be a large opportunity for us; we hear the lesson twice.

The second reason why the author of Mark described the Twelve as not so bright is to create a true image of these men being very human. Most of

them were fishermen who never went to school or had the opportunity to sit with a Rabbi to learn the deep Jewish principles. Most scholars believe most of the 12 could not read or write. They grew up learning to fish and that was all they knew. Fishing was the most important thing for them. It kept their families fed and that was the whole purpose of their existence. They didn't need to learn anything new and when they heard something new, they couldn't comprehend it. "The first shall be first and the first last"? That was completely against the culture they were living in.

I was trying to think of a parallel lesson in our time. I have lady friends who resigned their positions as secretaries to avoid trying to learn about computers. We now have same sex marriages. People dress in anyway they desire, even to church. Adult ladies color their hair green and purple and get tattoos. Everybody talks on their cell phones to people who are right across the table from them. Maybe you can think of more ways our culture has changed. Some things are harder to accept than others, but it gives us the opportunity to understand where the 12 disciples were coming from.

When Jesus came, their whole world was turned upside down. "Love your enemies"? "Forgive others over and over"? "The rich are NOT blessed more than

the poor"? These are hard lessons to learn, even for us today. The ways of Jesus are for everyone, for every culture, for all time, for eternity. Thanks be to God. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer. God of wisdom and truth for every age, we are grateful for the opportunity to sit at the feet of your Son as he teaches us. Some of what he says is foreign to our ears; hard to understand and hard to believe. Help us, dear God, to keep listening and to keep learning.

Today we pray for all those in the world who do not have the chance to learn, to go to school, to become career people to help change the world. We pray for those who suffer with learning disabilities and we bless all the teachers who work with these people. We ask for patience and perseverance as we continue on our journey to become Christians.

We pray for all those on our prayer list and all those we hold dear to our hearts. May they receive peace and calm in their quest to wholeness.

We pray all these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray . . .

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.

INVITATION TO SHARE:

Jesus came not to be served but to serve.
Let us follow this example and share our gifts
so that we may also experience the joys and
challenges of serving.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**Parent God, may this offering assist us
in continuing Christ's work in the world
to heal the grief, transgressions, and illnesses
that oppress and harm your creation. Amen.**

***RESPONSIVE BENEDICTION** *(Isaiah 53:4-12)*

Our lives are filled with struggles and suffering—
none of us are immune.

**The key to full life in Christ is not to rise above it,
but to struggle together and help one another along
the way, knowing that God is with us in every
moment. This is service.**

If we seek to serve and lift one another up,

committing to struggle together, together we will
witness Christ's glory. **So be it! Amen.**

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Joe
Knapp, Agnes Doctolero, David Seneczyn, Cathy
Ganschinietz, Warren Neff, Jack Harris, Wayne Huff,
Doris Moody.