

**PLEASE NOTE, THE SANCTUARY IS BACK
OPEN FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP**

**FEBRUARY 13, 2022
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**



**A great multitude came to hear him and be healed.
Luke 6:17-18**

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

**Rev. Rosemary Captain
Liturgy - Rev. Thom M. Shuman**

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Blessed are those who trust - in God!

We come in trust, to be grounded in God's love.

Blessed are those who hope - in God!

**We come in hope, trusting in the One who gives us
life.**

Blessed are those who delight - in God's Word!

**We come to hear God speak, hoping for healing and
joy.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

God of our wonder, Heart of creation:

we are blessed when we feast on your Word:

that Word which embraces us;

that Word which teaches us;

that Word which transfigures us;

that Word which grounds us.

Give us your Word this, and every, day. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 6:17-26

¹⁷ Jesus came down from the mountain with them (the newly appointed 12 disciples) and stood on a large area of level ground. A great company of his disciples and a huge crowd of people from all around Judea and Jerusalem and the area around Tyre and Sidon joined him there. ¹⁸ They came to hear him and to be healed from their diseases, and those bothered

by unclean spirits were healed. ¹⁹ The whole crowd wanted to touch him, because power was going out from him and he was healing everyone.

Happy people and doomed people

²⁰ Jesus raised his eyes to his disciples and said:

“Happy are you who are poor,
because God’s kingdom is yours.

²¹ Happy are you who hunger now,
because you will be satisfied.

Happy are you who weep now,
because you will laugh.

²² Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and condemn your name as evil because of the Human One.^[a] ²³ Rejoice when that happens! Leap for joy because you have a great reward in heaven. Their ancestors did the same things to the prophets.

²⁴ But how terrible for you who are rich,
because you have already received your comfort.

²⁵ How terrible for you who have plenty now,
because you will be hungry.

How terrible for you who laugh now,
because you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ How terrible for you when all speak well of you.

Their ancestors did the same things to the false prophets.

MESSAGE: “We Have a Choice”

The Gospel lesson we have today describes the conditions of those living under God’s favor (blessing) and those under God’s disfavor (curse or woe). This might sound familiar. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read similar beatitudes or blessings. However, one thing is clear – they are a series of bombshells.

It may be that we have read them so often that we have forgotten how revolutionary they are. Each one is a challenge. They take the accepted standards and turn them upside down. The people whom Jesus called happy the world would call wretched; and the people called wretched the world would call happy.

In our CEB translation they are called “happy” instead of “blessed are”. Usually, I prefer blessed but today I’d like us to think about happy. I believe happiness is a word we use more frequently than blessed. After all, we all want to be happy. We want our children to be happy. Are you happy at work? When you are retired you have time to do what makes you happy. See what I mean? Happy rolls off the tongue better than blessed.

So, let’s look again at how Luke interprets what Jesus is saying. Happy are you who are poor, hungry,

and weep. How radical? Jesus is telling us to flip over our value systems; what we think we value and would make us happy.

What is the real key to what Jesus is saying? It comes in verse 24. There Jesus says, “Woe to you who are rich because you have all the comfort you are going to get.” If you set your heart and spend your whole energies to obtain the things which the world values, you will get them. However, that is all you will ever get. You have had it!!

On the other hand, if you set your heart and spend all your energies to be utterly loyal to God and true to Christ you will run into all kinds of trouble; you may by the world’s standards, look unhappy, but much of your payment is still to come; and it will be joy eternal.

Another way to imagine this is to think about food. If you are already full, Jesus can’t give you more food. However, if you are hungry or empty, Jesus can give you his food and blessings upon blessings, because you have room in your heart for him.

G. K. Chesterton, whose principles constantly got him into trouble, once said, “I like getting into hot water. It keeps me clean!”

²² Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and condemn your name as evil because of the Human One. ²³ Rejoice when that happens!

Leap for joy because you have a great reward in heaven.” The time you spend in hot water with Jesus, will make you very clean in the eyes of God. We have a choice. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: God of blessings and God of woes. You give us blessings and we bring woes to ourselves. We thank you for giving us free will to face choices in our lives, yet even if we choose unwisely, you give of chance after chance to change our choices and follow you more and completely. We can be “stiff necked” people yet you love us anyway.

We pray that our world will learn to love you and the peace it can bring; peace to no longer be angry, or stubborn, or anxious, or in harm’s way. The value systems that we hold need to be changed, flipped like an ugly house into a beautiful home.

We pray for all those on our prayer list and all those we hold dearly in our hearts. We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed 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.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING: We appreciate your support of the church.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION/OFFERING:

You pour out your abundance on us, Loving God, as we can alleviate the sufferings of others, turn their woes into blessings, and their emptiness into overflowing grace and life. Take the gifts we offer and use them in the work of your new life which is in our midst. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

SENDING:

Grounded in God's love, we are sent out
to share abundance with those who have so little.
Blessed with Jesus' hope, we go forth
to fill the emptiness of those longing for justice.
Blessed with the Spirit's delight, we dance into the world
**to take the hands of our sisters and brother,
and gather at the edge of living waters for a picnic.
Amen.**

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Agnes Doctolero, David Seneczyn, Cathy Ganschinetz, Warren Neff, Jack Harris, Lynn Hursey, Robert Uhrig, Carol White, Dennis Franklin, John Biehl, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Rich Schmitt

**EVENING CIRCLE WILL MEET AFTER
WORSHIP ON FEBRUARY 13.**