

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 24, 2022
"Compassion"



St. John United Church of Christ

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***CALL TO WORSHIP:**
We gather to rejoice in the Holy One.
Revive us, O God, make us alive in Christ!
We assemble as people called to community by and

with the Redeemer.
Restore us, O God, make us alive in Christ!
We come open to the possibilities made new by the
Creator.

Revive us, O God, make us alive in Christ!

***INVOCATION**

Compassionate One, your love sustains us, molds us,
and empowers us. May we dwell in that love as you
dwell in us—faithfully, joyfully, and abundantly.
Renew us as your people grounded in you and
flourishing with you. Amen.

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

**Just God, we sense your anger at the injustice that
thrives in the world. We share your grief at the
discord that rages among your children, the
rejection of those who bear your image, and the
oppression of those you know by name. We turn
toward you for strength and guidance to turn away
from the norms of this world, the lure of self-
righteousness, and the appeal of comfort over
justice. Embolden us to believe that another world
is possible and empower us to participate in its
creation. Amen.**

***WORDS OF GRACE**

The One who is holy and righteous makes us holy and righteous. We are participants, heirs, and co-creators of new life found in the redemptive love of Jesus Christ and in the realm of the Holy One which has no end. In this, grace abounds and liberates us to new mornings, new mercies, and new life.

FIRST TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READING:

Hosea 1:2-10

The living parable of the forgiveness of adulterous behavior is used by the prophet at God's direction.

One of the early writing prophets, Hosea used his own experience as a symbolic representation of God and Israel. The relationship between Hosea and Gomer parallels the relationship between God and Israel. Even though Gomer runs away from Hosea and sleeps with another man, he loves her anyway and forgives her. Likewise, even though the people of Israel worshipped false gods, God continued to love them and did not abandon his covenant with them.^[6]

The Book of Hosea was a severe warning to the northern kingdom against the growing idolatry being practiced there; the book was a dramatic call to repentance. Christians extend the analogy of Hosea to Christ and the church: Christ the husband, [his church the bride](#). Christians see in this book a comparable call to the church not to forsake the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians also take the buying back of Gomer as the redemptive qualities of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

God commands Hosea to marry

² When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, marry a prostitute and have children of prostitution, for the people of the land commit great prostitution by deserting the LORD." ³ So Hosea went and took Gomer, and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁴ The LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will destroy the kingdom of the house of Israel. ⁵ On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Jezreel Valley." ⁶ Gomer became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Name her No Compassion, because I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel or forgive them. ⁷ But I will have compassion on the house of Judah. I, the LORD their God, will save them; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen." ⁸ When Gomer finished nursing No Compassion, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. ⁹ Then the LORD said, "Name him Not My People because you are not my people, and I am not your God."^[a]

Hope for the future

¹⁰ ^[b] Yet the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to

them, “You are not my people,” it will be said to them, “Children of the living God.”

EPISTLE READING: Colossians 2:6-19

Paul urges continued growth in the faith despite the opposition of those promoting a confining religious legalism.

⁶ So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. ⁷ Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught. ⁸ See to it that nobody enslaves you with philosophy and foolish deception, which conform to human traditions and the way the world thinks and acts rather than Christ. ⁹ All the fullness of deity lives in Christ’s body. ¹⁰ And you have been filled by him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by human hands. The circumcision of Christ is realized in the stripping away of the whole self-dominated by sin. ¹² You were buried with him through baptism and raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead because of the things you had done wrong and because your body wasn’t circumcised, God made you alive with Christ and forgave all the things you had done wrong. ¹⁴ He destroyed the record of the debt we

owed, with its requirements that worked against us. He canceled it by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ When he disarmed the rulers and authorities, he exposed them to public disgrace by leading them in a triumphal parade.

¹⁶ So don’t let anyone judge you about eating or drinking or about a festival, a new moon observance, or sabbaths. ¹⁷ These religious practices are only a shadow of what was coming—the body that cast the shadow is Christ. ¹⁸ Don’t let anyone who wants to practice harsh self-denial and worship angels rob you of the prize. They go into detail about what they have seen in visions and have become unjustifiably arrogant by their selfish way of thinking. ¹⁹ They don’t stay connected to the head. The head nourishes and supports the whole body through the joints and ligaments, so the body grows with a growth that is from God.

***GOSPEL: Luke 11:1-13**

Teaching the disciples to pray

11 Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

² Jesus told them, “When you pray, say:

'Father, uphold the holiness of your name.
Bring in your kingdom.

³ Give us the bread we need for today.

⁴ Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who has wronged us.
And don't lead us into temptation.'"

⁵ He also said to them, "Imagine that one of you has a friend and you go to that friend in the middle of the night. Imagine saying, 'Friend, loan me three loaves of bread' ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has arrived and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷ Imagine further that he answers from within the house, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up to give you anything.' ⁸ I assure you, even if he wouldn't get up and help because of his friendship, he will get up and give his friend whatever he needs because of his friend's brashness. ⁹ And I tell you: Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ Everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. To everyone who knocks, the door is opened.

¹¹ "Which father among you would give a snake to your child if the child asked for a fish? ¹² If a child asked for an egg, what father would give the child a

scorpion? ¹³ If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

These are the ancient words of God given to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "We are called to persistent faithfulness"

In all of our scripture readings we read today, we have a common lesson; be persistent in faithfulness, be persistent with prayer, be persistent with forgiveness, and be persistent with compassion. How can we do that? Is it too much for God to expect from us? Let's see if we can answer those questions.

Beginning in verse 5, Jesus tells us another parable. The late arrival of a traveler confronted a householder with an embarrassing situation because his pantry was empty and he could not fulfill the sacred obligations of hospitality. (*We've talked about the importance of hospitality before.*)

Late as it was, he went out to borrow from a friend. The friend's door was shut. In that part of the world no one would knock on a shut door unless the need was imperative. In the morning the door would be opened and remain open all day, for there was

little privacy; but if the door was shut, that was a definite sign that the householder did not wish to be disturbed. But the seeking householder was not deterred. He knocked, and kept on knocking until his friend got up and gave him what he needed.

Jesus told the disciples that this story will tell them about prayer. The lesson of this parable is not that we must persist in prayer; it is not that we must beat at God's door until we finally compel God from very weariness to give us what we want or until we coerce an unwilling God to answer.

A parable literally means *something laid alongside*. If we lay something beside another thing to teach a lesson, that lesson may be drawn from the fact that the things are like each other or from the fact that the things are a contrast to each. The point here is based, not on likeness, but on *contrast*. What Jesus says is, "If a rude and unwilling householder can in the end be coerced by a friend's shameless persistence into giving him what he needs, *how much more* will God who is a loving Father supply all God's children's needs?" "If you" God says, "who are evil, know that you are bound to supply your children's needs, are bound to supply your children's needs, *how much more* will God?"

This does not absolve us from intensity in prayer. After all, we can guarantee the reality and sincerity of

our desire only by the passion with which we pray. But it does mean this, that we are not wringing gifts from an unwilling God, but going to one who knows our needs better than we know them ourselves and whose heart towards us is the heart of generous love. **If we do out receive what we pray for, it is not because God grudgingly refuses to give it but because God has some better thing for us. There is no such thing as unanswered prayer. The answer given may not be the answer we desired or expected; but even when it is a refusal it is the answer of the love and the wisdom of God.**

Perhaps we can find the answers to the questions we began with in our reading in the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians. Paul was trying to convince the Colossians to make Christ the sole basis for their lives.

Before any petition we is made, we are reminded that the fundamental reality is our confession of faith in "Christ Jesus the Lord." In accepting the gospel as more than mere human word, indeed as the summons of God, we receive Christ not only because we accept the message about him as true but also because we appropriate him as a living reality. Because Christ is the complete embodiment of God, we are thereby enabled to experience "fullness in him". If we call ourselves Christians, we must let

Jesus be “in” us and we must allow Jesus to be ruler over our lives; everything we do, everything we think.

If we are to be persistent in faithfulness, be persistent with prayer, be persistent with forgiveness, and be persistent with compassion. How can we do that? **Give ourselves completely to Christ Jesus.** Is that too much for God to expect from us? Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.

Transcendent God, approachable God, loving God, we come to worship you in humility and admitting our need of the aid of your Spirit to pray appropriately and in accordance with your will. Receive us as we offer our prayers, our songs, our offerings, and ourselves through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Listening God, prayer-teacher, prayer-prompter, we are often mechanical in our prayers, casual, without expectation of response. We separate our petitions for forgiveness from the need to forgive others; we prevent the discipline that would change us and turn us outward again with persistent concern for others and ongoing intercession for the whole world, not just our own little circle. As we pray for forgiveness, give us a forgiving spirit.

With this spirit of forgiveness, we pray for all the people of the world who are in harm’s way, or have no food, or have no escape from the heat wave. May they be given help by those around them who are able to give assistance. May we support our neighbors as best we can.

We pray for all those on our prayer list that they find comfort knowing you walk with them during their suffering.

We are grateful that your Son gave us the words for our prayer . . .

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy 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 GENEROSITY:

Compassion stirs us to generous action and hopeful giving. We share the abundance of our resources and spread the gifts we have received for the good of the world and the work of the kingdom.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND
THANKSGIVING**

God our Companion, receive these gifts as seeds to be nurtured and grown into new abundance, more possibilities, and magnifying gifts for your kingdom on earth.

***BENEDICTION:**

Let us go, revived, as ambassadors of compassion in the world, showing the glory of God, embodying the peace of God, and living the hope of God. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, David Seneczyn, Warren Neff, Carol White, Dennis Franklin, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Dorothy Wagner, Theo Mally, Jane Riess, Betty Massey, Dorothy Ovelgoenner, Gary Whitkas, Sandy Fort, Ingrid Alexiou