

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 31, 2022



**Can you carry that bag into heaven
with you?**

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

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Pianist - Sharon Banjavcic
Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Our Loving God gathers us from the east and the west, from the north and from the south.

The Holy One is in our midst. Let us say so!

We cried out to our God in the time of trouble and eased our distress.

The Holy One is in our midst. God leads us on right paths.

Our Provider satisfies our thirst and meets our needs.

The Holy One is in our midst. Consider God's steadfast love!

***INVOCATION:**

Holy Love, we worship you as your people. You tether us to you in righteousness and covenant. Reveal your face to us. Let us see you in our midst, in our neighbors, and in ourselves. Clothe us in love and compassion, and continually fashion us as your people for you are our God. Amen.

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

Gracious One, you have knit us together wonderfully. You have promised your abiding presence in our lives and have guided us with love.

We turn away from you and toward the path to destruction and discord. We judge our neighbor rather than love them and we fail to even honor ourselves as your beloved creation. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

The God of mercy bends toward their children with love and hope. The Holy One leads us when we wander onto divergent paths and nourishes our hunger for the newness of life. In God, grace abounds freely, abundantly, and extravagantly.

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator,
and the Christ and the Spirit so near.
As it was from the start so it shall be forever,
One God always here.**

(Repeat two more times.)

(end) **One God always here. One God always here.**

FIRST TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE: Hosea 11:1-11

God's Lament

Divine love

11 When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

2 The more I called them,
the further they went from me;

they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and they burned incense to idols.

3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;
I took them up in my arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.

4 I led them
with bands of human kindness,
with cords of love.
I treated them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks;
I bent down to them and fed them.

Divine frustration

5 They will return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria will be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.

6 The sword will strike wildly in their cities;
it will consume the bars of their gates
and will take everything because of their
schemes.

7 My people are bent on turning away from me;
and though they cry out to the Most High,^[a]
he will not raise them up.

Divine compassion

8 How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

My heart winces within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.

Israel's and Judah's responses

⁹ I won't act on the heat of my anger;
I won't return to destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not a human being,
the holy one in your midst;
I won't come in harsh judgment.

¹⁰ They will walk after the LORD,
who roars like a lion.
When he roars,
his children will come trembling from the west.

¹¹ They will come trembling like a bird,
and like a dove from the land of Assyria;
and I will return them to their homes, says
the LORD.

EPISTLE READING: Colossians 3:1-11

Your life hidden in Christ

3 Therefore, if you were raised with Christ, look for the things that are above where Christ is sitting at God's right side. ² Think about the things above and not things on earth. ³ You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

⁵ So put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth, such as sexual immorality, moral corruption, lust, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁶ The wrath of God is coming upon disobedient people because of these things. ⁷ You used to live this way, when you were alive to these things. ⁸ But now set aside these things, such as anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other. Take off the old human nature with its practices ¹⁰ and put on the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge by conforming to the image of the one who created it. ¹¹ In this image there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all things and in all people.

***GOSPEL MESSAGE: Luke 12:13-21**

Warning against greed

¹³ Someone from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."
¹⁴ Jesus said to him, "Man, who appointed me as judge or referee between you and your brother?"
¹⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Guard yourself against all kinds of greed. After all, one's life isn't determined by one's possessions, even when someone is very wealthy." ¹⁶ Then he told them a

parable: “A certain rich man’s land produced a bountiful crop. ¹⁷ He said to himself, What will I do? I have no place to store my harvest! ¹⁸ Then he thought, Here’s what I’ll do. I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. That’s where I’ll store all my grain and goods. ¹⁹ I’ll say to myself, You have stored up plenty of goods, enough for several years. Take it easy! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself. ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?’ ²¹ This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren’t rich toward God.”

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

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “You can’t take it with you”

It was not uncommon for people in Palestine to take their unsettled disputes to respected Rabbis; but Jesus refused to be mixed up in anyone’s disputes about money. But out of that request there came to Jesus an opportunity to lay down what his followers’ attitude to material things should be.

To those who had an abundant supply of possessions Jesus spoke this parable of the rich fool.

This parable sounds very much like some movies or TV shows with the same plot. Maybe you can think of a few.

In this parable, two things stand out about this man. 1.) *He never saw beyond himself.* There is no parable which is so full of the words, I, me, my, and mine. For example, “What shall I do because I have no room to store **my** wheat. This is what I will do; I will pull down **my** barns and build greater and then I will store all of **my** wheat and **my** goods.”

I counted nine first person singular words in those few sentences. Now he goes on to plan a life which apparently had not even the remotest thought for anything else except his own ease and enjoyment. 2.) *He never saw beyond the world the world he was living.* To himself, he was by far that most important person in all the world. I can picture him laying on a air raft in his swimming pool with a beverage in his hand, just being lazy in the sun and smiling to himself about how smart he is to have so many possessions.

There is a story of a conversation between an ambitious youth and an older man who knew life. Said the young man, “I will learn my trade.” “And then?” “I will set up in business.” “And then?” “I will make my fortune.” “And then?” “I suppose that I

shall grow old and retire and live on my money.”
“And then?” “Well, I suppose that some day I will die.” And then came the stabbing question, “And then?” **Jesus just put a hole in his floatie raft in the swimming pool. And I bet he can’t swim.**

As a grim Spanish proverb says, “There are no pockets in a shroud.” Amen.

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

Infinite God, not only did you create us in your likeness but in Christ have become our kin to ransom from the bondage of sin and death. Receive the praise we bring as those you have set free to serve you and our neighbors as ourselves. Thank you for continuing to teach us and guide us to a better life in you, where money is no good and love is everything.

God above all, you may fairly judge us for living below the level of our potential. Forgive us for being only partly freed from our old natures and our sins when you have made it possible for us to be renewed in the image of yourself, the likeness in which humanity was created and which has been manifest a second time in Christ. The life we have lived is not the full resurrection-life Christ has offered us. Be

patient with our slowness in putting our new nature in Christ Jesus.

Many times, we get frustrated with those who govern us. Many never see beyond themselves. They are searching for glory and pictures in newspapers. May they instead be wise in their vocation, ready to hear what others believe to be the truth, and humble in sharing our own insights.

Bless those who are preparing to teach our children and youth in schools. May they find wisdom and patience when dealing with who may or may not want to learn.

Compassionate Christ, heal those who are sick in body or mind, especially those known and dear to us who look to you for healing and comfort. We pray for all people who are in harm’s way or who are in severe need for food and water. May kind citizens of the world help them as much as they can.

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 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:

Jesus said, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." (Luke 12:15) The promise of life abundantly invites us to trust God's provision and abundance of resources for all. We share our gifts from the abundance given to us.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Loving God, may we demonstrate our love through these gifts. Bless them and magnify them so that all creation will benefit from your abundance and gift of life and love. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

As we have been led by cords of human kindness, let us live connected to all creation. As we have been freed, may we pursue liberty for all. As we have known God's gracious love, may we embody God's abundant love. Amen.

CONDOLENCES to the family and friends of **Dorothy Wagner**

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