

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
July 3, 2022



The Kingdom of God has come near!

St. John United Church of Christ

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Rev. Rosemary Captain

Organist - Sharon Banjavcic

Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

Communion Liturgy - Rev. Thom Shuman

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

May a joyful sound to the Holy One. Let the earth rejoice.

How awesome are your works, O Sovereign!

Creation groans under the pressure of war, environmental abuse, and communal disconnection.

We cry out to you, Present God, and you hear and respond.

You turn our mourning into movement and stir our souls to action and to rest.

Everlasting God, we will give thanks and praise you for you clothe us in joy and peace.

***INVOCATION:**

God with us, you send us into the world as your agents of restoration and change. You speak to us in the stillness of our rest and the chaos of a frenzied world. You guide us in troubling times, and you move us to dance in celebration. We give thanks for your presence among us. Open all points of receptivity within us as we worship you, Holy and Living God. Amen.

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

Spirit of the Living God, temptation surrounds us. Self-preservation lures us to indifference. Fear of confrontation coaxes us to keep silent about things that matter. The desire to be right entices us to ignore the cries of our neighbors. Too often we

ignore the call to go and to be in favor of staying stuck in our attitudes and behaviors. Too often, we are the ones who refuse to welcome you into our intimate space, who resist the work of transformation, and who remain unresponsive to the burdens of our siblings in creation. Spirit of Gentleness, redirect us back to the path of life, the way of justice, and the hope of peace. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Our Companion and Advocate takes this journey with us. Our invitation to make the kingdom of God our dwelling place continually renews. The Righteous One opens the door and eases our entry into new life, new mercy, and new grace.

***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.**

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20**

Seventy-two sent out

10 After these things, the Lord commissioned seventy-two others and sent them on ahead in pairs to every city and place he was about to go. ² He said to them, “The harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest. ³ Go! Be warned, though, that I’m sending you out as lambs among wolves. ⁴ Carry no wallet, no bag, and no sandals. Don’t even greet anyone along the way. ⁵ Whenever you enter a house, first say, ‘May peace be on this house.’ ⁶ If anyone there shares God’s peace, then your peace will rest on that person. If not, your blessing will return to you. ⁷ Remain in this house, eating and drinking whatever they set before you, for workers deserve their pay. Don’t move from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a city and its people welcome you, eat what they set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘God’s kingdom has come upon you.’ ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a city and the people don’t welcome you, go out into the streets and say, ¹¹ ‘As a complaint against you, we brush off the dust of your city that has collected on our feet. But know this: God’s kingdom has come to you.’

¹⁶ Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

The seventy-two return

¹⁷ The seventy-two returned joyously, saying, “Lord, even the demons submit themselves to us in your name.”

¹⁸ Jesus replied, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. ¹⁹ Look, I have given you authority to crush snakes and scorpions underfoot. I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, don’t rejoice because the spirits submit to you. Rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven.”

This is the ancient Words of faith given to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “How much can you accomplish when the Holy Spirit is with you?”

Jesus is sending out seventy, two by two, into the towns and villages where Jesus himself will later go. This story is peculiar to Luke. Both Matthew and Mark gospels record the sending out of the Twelve, and some of the instructions are the same however there are some differences. Why does Luke send out

seventy? (Some translations say seventy -two.) The number seventy was to the Jews symbolic. It was the number of the elders who were chosen to help Moses with the task of leading and directing the people in the wilderness. It was held to be the number of nations in the world. The author Luke was the writer with the universalist view and it may well be that he was thinking of the day when every nation in the world would know and love his Lord.

When we read again verse 16, we see that it contains one of many records of Jesus linking the treatment of his followers to himself and to God. “Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.” It must have been encouraging for the seventy to hear that they God is with them in this mission. (Plus the Holy Spirit will give them the power to accomplish great things.)

This practice of sending them as emissaries ahead of him began when Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem and it continues here, and will appear again at Jesus’ entry into the city of Jerusalem. As the reader we can sense not only preparation for Jesus, but also something magisterial or regal about persons running ahead to announce Christ’s coming.

The instructions to travel light and to take no time for social amenities could reflect the conviction that

the end is near and all their work is under the shadow of the Eschaton, meaning the Day of Judgment.

Although that element is not lacking, more likely Luke is continuing consistently the tone of intense singlemindedness begun back in chapter 9 verse 51; “He set his face to go to Jerusalem”. This message is continued in stating the strict demands of those who would become disciples. The missionaries were to depend on the hospitality of their hosts and were not to go searching about for the best room and board.

Jesus had been rejected in a Samaritan village, but rather than call down fire upon those villagers, Jesus moved on to other places. The missionaries were to make brief their rituals of departure making no pronouncements of doom, but rather letting what had been missed by such persons serve as the judgment. There will be judgment, but that is a word only Jesus speaks. It is also significant that to both receivers and rejecters the message is the same: “The kingdom of God has come near.”

I think this is the important lesson we can learn from this story. We do not want to miss out on the message from Jesus. We do not want to miss the message he is giving us. We do not want to miss out on the blessings we can receive when we believe and

trust Jesus for all that he can do for us through God and the Holy Spirit. Yes, there will be a time for judgment, but if we aren't present and in line with others, are names will never be written in heaven. Amen.

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

Eternal Parent, stronger than any father or mother, gentler than any father or mother, we rejoice in your care for us your children and your encircling love that weeks to draw your quarreling children into an unbroken family. We are thankful for periods of peace and places of tranquility whenever and wherever we find them. We are grateful for peacemakers who seek to relieve tensions and propose compromises, averting violence and encouraging negotiation. We worship the Son of peace, the Father of peace, Mother of peace.

Grant your living Spirit to all of us in your church in powerful persuasion to overcome inertia and reticence to do your work in the world. Bless all who call your people to service, not only the work of prayer, but also the work of repairing what is broken and building what is needed, and joining what is separated, and healing what is diseased and ordering what is disordered.

We take this time in our worship to pray intently for all people in our world and in our communities and in our homes. May they find your peace no matter their circumstances of war, illness, poverty, homelessness, and loneliness.

We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ as we pray together . . .

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.

***HOLY COMMUNION:**

May the God of freedom be with you.

And also with you.

Children of God, lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the One who sets us free for lives of service and hope.

God's children: let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

We will sing our songs of freedom to the One who calls us to new life.

Starry nights that stretch across the sky, waves of every grain shimmering in the sun: these are the gift you gave to us, God of wonder and joy.

Mountains tower above plains overflowing with abundant fruit; land stretching from sea to sea where we could live with you.

Freely, you offered the abundance of all that is good and beautiful to us, but we mocked your hopes, choosing to be deceived by sin. you appointed prophets, sending them to every town and place we lived, sharing your peace with us through them. But we would not welcome them into our homes, or into our hearts.

Then you sent Jesus to us, to share with us that freedom which calls us to follow in obedience.

As we sing of those who have gone before us, as we remember how they lived as sisters and brothers as you called them to live, we proclaim our thanks to you:

SANCTUS: NCH 790

Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty,

The whole universe speaks of your glory,

O God most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest!

The One who could heal our brokenness,
the One who could teach us self-control,
the One who could lead us out of all the places our
feet have strayed, Jesus came to live among us,
leaving the starry band of glory behind.
Loving your mercy for us more than his own life,
he willingly chose to go to the cross,
that we might receive your gracious gift
of life forever with you.

As we remember the freedom he offered to all,
as we celebrate the gift of life which comes to us
here at this Table of love, we speak of that mystery
called faith:

**Christ died, bearing our burdens.
Christ was raised, mocking death's power.
Christ will return, for the good of all.**

As you pour out your Spirit upon this Table abundant
with the gifts of the Bread and of the Cup,
shed your grace upon your children gathered in this
place.

Gorged on the moldy meals offered to us by sin and
death, we forget those who hunger for freedom.
But eating the Bread of life, we can go, carrying a
harvest of hope to them.

Intoxicated on the world's sour grapes, we forget the
injustices imposed upon our sisters and brothers.
But drinking from the Cup of grace,
we can go where you intend to go,
inviting everyone we meet to join us in your new
creation of peace, mercy, and wonder.

And when all that holds us back is gone,
when the freedom of your eternity is given to us,
we will gather with brotherhood and sisterhood
of believers of every time and place,
who have been crowned with your goodness and
love, forever singing your praises, O God Most High
and Holy, Amen.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS:

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

**Gracious and loving God, you have made us one in
the body of Christ and nourished us at your table
with holy food and drink. Now send us forth to be
your people in the world. Grant us strength to
persevere in resisting evil, and to proclaim in all we
say and do your Good News in Christ Jesus our
Savior. Amen.**

***BENEDICTION:**

Go on your way into the harvest as laborers bringing good news into a world of need. Go on your way as companions of one another, of the Spirit, and of Christ. Go on your way in the assurance that the God of peace goes with you, before you, and behind you. Go in peace. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, David Seneczyn, Warren Neff, Carol White, Dennis Franklin, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Dorothy Wagner, Theo Mally, Leah Horner, Dan Gouge, Jane Riess, Judy Hartmann