

The Second Sunday
after Pentecost
June 19, 2022
"Fear of the Truth"



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

***CALL TO WORSHIP: (based on Psalm 42)**

As a deer longs for flowing streams of water,
our souls reach out to seek our God.

Where is our God?

**In the cleansing of the rain, in the refreshing of a
pool, in the predictability of a faucet.**

With glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
our voices lift toward our God.

**Where is our God? In the melody of voices raised in
concert, in the stillness of silence, in the cacophony**

of spontaneous praise.

As deep calls to deep, we come to worship
the Living God.

**Where is our God? In the echoes of our prayers, in
the reverence of bowed heads, in the hope of raised
faces. The Holy One is with us.**

***INVOCATION:**

Holy Wisdom, we hear you calling us to gather and to
hope in your name. Ignite sacred courage in us to
proclaim the good news of justice from the comfort
of the sanctuary to the public witness of the city
gates. Inspire a compelling vision of a gracious,
beloved, and empowered community that propels us
to confront inequities, challenge privilege, and
participate in your creative work in our time. Renew
our hope for humanity so that we might rejoice in
this inhabited world and delight in our siblings.
Amen.

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

Holy and Gracious God, fear seeks to be our constant
companion. It stifles us with its overwhelming
presence and prolific imagination.

**Fear surrounds us and blocks our vision and your
path. Fear keeps us from picking up our cross as**

much as it suppresses our joy in you. Fear invites us to believe the easy lie rather than confronting the hard truths necessary for your kingdom to come.

Too often, we cast off your perfect love in favor of insidious fear. Forgive us for choosing fear when we could have you, your presence, and your way as our companion on our journey.

Empower us to reject fear and all that fall complicit in dampening your truth.

***UNISON WORDS OF GRACE:**

Romans 5:1b–2a reminds us that “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand.” That grace promises the glory of transformation through the acknowledgement of need for it. New life awaits as “hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (v.5) Receive grace, embrace transformation, and enter the newness of life in which Christ fashions our struggles into character and hope.

SCRIPTURE FROM THE EPISTLE: Galatians 3:23-29
The Words of Paul.

²³ Before faith came, we were guarded under the Law, locked up until faith that was coming would be revealed, ²⁴ so that the Law became our custodian until Christ so that we might be made righteous by faith.

God’s children are heirs in Christ

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian.

²⁶ You are all God’s children through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ Now if you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise.

***GOSPEL READING: LUKE 8:26-39**

Jesus frees a demon-possessed man

²⁶ Jesus and his disciples sailed to the Gerasenes’ land, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷ As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a certain man met him. The man was from the city and was possessed by demons. For a long time, he had lived among the tombs, naked and homeless. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down before him. Then he shouted, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son

of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" ²⁹ He said this because Jesus had already commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had taken possession of him, so he would be bound with leg irons and chains and placed under guard. But he would break his restraints, and the demon would force him into the wilderness.

³⁰ Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had entered him. ³¹ They pleaded with him not to order them to go back into the abyss.^[a] ³² A large herd of pigs was feeding on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs. Jesus gave them permission, ³³ and the demons left the man and entered the pigs. The herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When those who tended the pigs saw what happened, they ran away and told the story in the city and in the countryside. ³⁵ People came to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone. He was sitting at Jesus' feet, fully dressed and completely sane. They were filled with awe. ³⁶ Those people who had actually seen what had happened told them how the demon-possessed man had been delivered. ³⁷ Then everyone gathered from the region

of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave their area because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and returned across the lake. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged to come along with Jesus as one of his disciples. Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return home and tell the story of what God has done for you." So he went throughout the city proclaiming what Jesus had done for him.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "Who fears the truth, who tells the truth, and who believes the truth?"

To me, any discussion of what is "truth" is very interesting, if not controversial. It doesn't matter if the discussion is philosophical, theological, political, psychological, or even in the field of medicine and health. Who knows the truth and how do they know the truth? Is it a gut feeling? Is it backed by life experiences, or hearsay? Does it come from scientific facts? Do we want to know the truth? Are we afraid of the truth? See what I mean. It's like a can of worms; where's the head, where's the tail of each worm.

You may have noticed that the “theme” of today’s service is the “fear of the truth”. And our scripture readings are great examples. In the letter to the Galatians, in Chapter 3 Paul concludes the fairly extended argument for justification by faith begun in verse 1. From their own experience the Galatians should have known that the Spirit came to them through “believing the gospel message” and not through keeping the law. Even in the example of Abraham generations ago, the scripture read that Abraham was righteous by God because of his faith in God’s promise, not because he kept specific legal requirements.

In verses 10-14 of Chapter 3 we find that righteousness based on law keeping is ill-founded primarily because no one can keep the law perfectly. If being accepted by God is a matter of achievement, true acceptance would require flawless performance. Everyone who tries to become religious in this way ultimately finds religion to be a curse. Instead, we are made righteous not by our achievement but through God’s gracious gift, which we appropriate through faith.

Am I the only one who was taught as a child to “be good” and “be nice to others” so Jesus would love me? It was all about good deeds? Here is a truth

that I believed even though it was not the truth; just ask Paul.

Now we come to our Gospel story. The citizens of Gerasa believed in demons which were impossible to get rid of. Jesus proved them wrong. Yet they were afraid to believe it. The demon himself knew who Jesus was, but the citizens did not believe it. The herd of swine was lost and the citizens blamed Jesus. The citizens missed altogether the truth that Jesus was trying to demonstrate to them that love is better than fear. The healed man wants, of course, to continue with Jesus, but the behavior of his fellow citizens makes it clear he was needed in this village to be a witness and “declare how much God has done for them.” I wonder if the healed man is able to do that? People seem to believe what they want to no matter what they have seen with their own eyes.

I don’t know if I answered the question about what is truth and what it takes to believe it. In my preaching class at seminary, we were taught that no matter what, preach the good news of the gospel. Jesus brought us the ultimate truth and if we believe what he taught, our faith will make us free. Free to be with God in our lives and forever more. Amen.

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

In a dark world of lies and deceit, O God, we come to your light and your truth. Receive our praise and hear our prayers that we may always be guided by your written Word and by the Word alive in the Spirit of Christ.

Mighty and merciful God, grant us the aid of your Holy Spirit that we may pray earnestly for all your people. Hear our prayers for all who are distressed and afflicted, the physically disadvantaged, the mentally ill, and all who are sick or suffering as we pray for those on our prayer list.

We pray that your message of truth and love may be spread throughout the entire world, as we pray for those people in harm's way due to war. Grant us the strength and courage to be the one's to spread your message, dear God. We thank you for sending your Son to inspire us to do your will as we pray in his name.

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.

**PRAYER RESPONSE: Three-fold Amen.
Amen, Amen, Amen.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

The gifts of God come generously and abundantly. We hold, nurture, and amplify them as they are entrusted to our care. We respond faithfully by sharing them for the good of community and creation. In this act of faith and trust, we transform our resources of time, talent, and finances into the good news in the world.

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

We give you thanks, God Our Help, for the abundance of the gifts you have planted in us as seeds that we may share in bloom. May these offerings be received and magnified for your glory.

***BENEDICTION:**

May peace be with you as you confront lies with truth and fear with hope. May the Abiding One strengthen you to stand in truth and hope. May the Living Water refresh you with new streams of righteousness. May Wisdom be the voice you follow

now as you go out into the world, encouraged and embolden, and renewed. 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

Patriotic and Folk Music Concert
Friday, June 24 at 7pm
St. John UCC in Collinsville
Free Admission - an offering will be collected