

**THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST
OCTOBER 16, 2022
“GIVE US JUSTICE”**



*St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights, IL
Email – stjohnuccfairview@gmail.com
Rev. Rosemary Captain*

*Organist – Sharon Banjavcic
Liturgy - Rev. Teña T. Nock*

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Righteous One, you are ever listening.
**Many: We come boldly, lifting our praise to you,
because we know you hear us.**

Bringer of Justice, you reveal truth to us.
**You help us to see how things are
and how they can be.**
Eternal God, you persist in love and justice.
We want to persist in love and justice too.

***INVOCATION:**

Righteous One, we are thankful that justice flows from you like a stream. You bid us to come and experience the equity of your love. We rejoice in knowing that justice is an aspect of your love and is without end. Enable us to be steadfast in our hope in you as we work alongside you to ensure those who need justice receive it. Amen

***PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**
Source of Wisdom, we confess that at times, we can be self-serving, and we lose sight of community. Sometimes, we don't respect you, ourselves, or each other. Yet, you are just toward us even when we are not. We know that we can trust you, so we yield our hearts and minds to you. You are persistent in your desire to restore us because you want us to have what is best for us. Thank you for this moment of transformation. We give you thanks that we are better for it. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

God is the source and provider of grace, love, and justice, and because we are Imago Dei, we have the assurance that those gifts flow through us. They flow through us, to us. God's justice makes a difference in us and compels us to show up in the fullness of who we are.

***GLORIA:** Written by Rev. Dr. Christopher Grundy

**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 READING: Jeremiah 31:27-34

²⁷ The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will plant seeds in Israel and Judah, and both people and animals will spring up. ²⁸ Just as I watched over them to dig up and pull down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and plant, declares the LORD. ²⁹ In those days, people will no longer say:

Sour grapes eaten by parents
leave a bitter taste in the mouths of their children.

³⁰ Because everyone will die for their own sins:

whoever eats sour grapes
will have a bitter taste in their own mouths.

³¹ The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. ³² It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant with me even though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my Instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ They will no longer need to teach each other to say, "Know the LORD!" because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins.

EPISTLE READING: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

The Words of Paul

¹⁴ But you must continue with the things you have learned and found convincing. You know who taught you. ¹⁵ Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ

Jesus.¹⁶ Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character,¹⁷ so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.

Timothy's commission and Paul's departure

4 I'm giving you this commission in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is coming to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearance and his kingdom.² Preach the word. Be ready to do it whether it is convenient or inconvenient. Correct, confront, and encourage with patience and instruction.³ There will come a time when people will not tolerate sound teaching. They will collect teachers who say what they want to hear because they are self-centered.⁴ They will turn their back on the truth and turn to myths.⁵ But you must keep control of yourself in all circumstances. Endure suffering, do the work of a preacher of the good news, and carry out your service fully.

GOSPEL READING: Luke 18:1-8

Justice for the faithful

18 Jesus was telling them a parable about their need to pray continuously and not to be discouraged.² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people.³ In that city there

was a widow who kept coming to him, asking, 'Give me justice in this case against my adversary.'⁴ For a while he refused but finally said to himself, I don't fear God or respect people,⁵ but I will give this widow justice because she keeps bothering me. Otherwise, there will be no end to her coming here and embarrassing me."⁶ The Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.⁷ Won't God provide justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he be slow to help them?⁸ I tell you, he will give them justice quickly. But when the Human One comes, will he find faithfulness on earth?"

***RESPONSE:** The ancient words revealed to us anew.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "How to pray?"

This parable is very similar to the one we read a few weeks ago. That parable talked about the late arrival at a man's house who had no food to serve him so he went to a friend's house to ask for help. At first the friend would not even open the door, but the man asking was persistent and eventually he got out of bed and gave him some food for his visitor.

The idea seems to be that if we batter at God's door long enough, in the end God's resistance will be

broken down and we will get what we want. However, that's not the point of these two parables; the point is how much more will God as your loving parent, give you all things that are needful?" The prime lesson is not that shameless persistence painfully extracts blessings from an unwilling God; but that, in prayer, we are coming to one who is our God and who is even more ready to give than we are to ask.

But we can't leave the matter there. The question immediately arises. "Is it then true that I need only ask for what I want and I will get it from this loving, generous God?" There's more to be said about this.

Bible teacher William Barclay has written "the laws of prayer" and maybe it will help us know the difference between persistence and humble asking.

#1 God knows far better than we do what is good for us. If you've ever been around children, you know they ask for everything and they don't realize the danger in the thing they ask for. They want to play with matches. They want to drive when they are 12. A parent must refuse a child's request not because he does not love him but because he does. God is in the same relation to us. We often find out, when we take the long view, that had our prayers been answered, it would have been not to our good but to our harm.

#2 God alone sees all time. We are rather like someone who goes to the movies in the middle of the film. We have not seen the beginning and we will not see the end. We can see only the little bit at which we are present. So often we pray in ignorance and God does not answer the prayer in our way but in God's way, because God has something better in store for us.

#3 Prayer must be absolutely sincere. The persistence of the people in the parable was proof of the utter earnestness of their desires. It's quite possible to pray for things because they are right things and yet not to want them. In fact, sometimes we would be unpleasantly surprise if our prayers were literally answered. If we received what we prayed for we may find that we didn't really want it. What if we were upset with a neighbor and prayed he would die. Wouldn't we be very upset if he did.

#4 The effective prayer must be definite. Luther used to say that usually we are far too vague in our prayers, especially when it comes to sin. We can't just say "O God. I'm a wretched person." We must detail our sins, really and definitely, and often painfully, confessing them to God. Especially when we pray to God for things we want. It's a true test of their rightness or wrongness, to see whether or not we can speak about them to God.

#5 *Our cooperation is absolutely essential.* We must pray and then do our best to make our prayers come true. It's always wrong to look on God as the easy way out. Suppose we have to take a test at school or work and we have done no preparation. We have not studied a bit. We take the test and know none of the answers because we have been shirking our part. We can pray to God that we pass the exam, but that prayer has no chance of being answered. We pray for a cure from our doctor but we refuse to take the medicines, or eat healthier, or do the physical therapy, do you think our prayers to be well will be answered? When we pray for the poor to be helped or for the sad to be comforted or for the sick to be encouraged, our prayer is sadly ineffective unless we do what we can to help the very people we are praying for. It is true that without God we can do nothing; but God needs our help to make our prayers come true.

#6 When we remember God's love and wisdom we see that there is one perfect prayer. After we have made our prayers to God, we must add, as Jesus himself added, "Not my will, but thine be done." For the best prayer of all is not that which tries to extract things from God but that which seeks to make ourselves always willing to accept what God in God's love and wisdom sends.

And as we learned last week, always begin your prayers with praise and thanksgiving to God. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.
God of great faithfulness, we rejoice in your constant care. You have created a world that is magnificent, not without danger but also with safeguards and places of rest. The people who were in harm's way from recent earthly disasters are being ministered and helped by others who God sent to their aide. And we are grateful.

We are thankful for all who work for our physical health and safety, and for those who teach us your saving Word, preparing us for judgment day. Grant to all of us who have known your forgiveness a forgiving disposition that we may speak your saving word to sinners with compassion, and bring to those who are weary consolation and encouragement. May our manner of life day by day commend Christ to those who live without faith in him. We are grateful that you sent your Son to us to teach that faith.

Great Physician, heal and relieve those who are sick or anxious for the health of family and friends. As we pray for all those on our prayer list, grant encouragement to the depressed and sorrowful,

courage to the fearful, and peace of mind to the overwrought.

As in all things we pray not our will but thine be done. As we pray together . . .

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:

God's justice is persistent in affecting change and invites us to be liberal and tenacious in our giving. Let us bring gifts to further justice and peace wherever they are desired and needed. Let these resources be used to facilitate a just peace for all. Amen.

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

Steadfast One, receive our gifts in the gladness we give them. Thank you that we have an abundance of resources to share so that every need is met. May we always give from wide open hearts, and may

what we give, be used to bring a balm of justice.
Amen.

***BENEDICTION**

As you depart this space, may you be committed to persisting in prayer. May you add your voice with those who cry out for justice and take the actions to ensure justice prevails. Go forth knowing that you are heard, and you can hear. God is with you, now GO IN GOD. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, David Seneczyn, Warren Neff, Carol White, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Theo Mally, Jane Reiss, Sandy Fort, Becky Ballard, Rosemary Williams, Ginny Ganschinietz, Larry Wagner, Penny Wagner, Chris Captain.