

FATHER'S DAY
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
JUNE 18, 2023



ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

ONE: This is a time of God's appearing; let us worship!
Let us recognize that God is within and among us.

**MANY: God's ear is inclined toward us. We know that
God listens and hears our prayers.**

ONE: We are here to offer our thanks to God.

We will pay our vows to God in the presence of others.

**MANY: We are grateful for the grace in which we
stand. We praise God with great joy and gladness.**

ONE: God bears us up on eagles' wings. God draws us
into covenant community.

**MANY: We will listen for God's commandments. We
will seek to do all the God requires.**

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION:** God of all creation, help us to
recognize your presence among us. May We greet one
another as your precious children and as messengers of
your care. Help us offer such hospitality to one another
that even the most skeptical among us will be touched
by love. You are love; in you we find hope amid our
weakness and doubt. Let your glory shine in this place
today as we call on your name. Amen.

***CALL TO CONFESSION:**

Meeting God can be a very disturbing experience, for
God may require of us changes that we fear. We may
hear challenges that push us beyond our comfort zones.
In our prayers of confession, we seek to overcome our
resistance to God's direction and open ourselves to
greater possibilities.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

God, we often fail to recognize that you are always with us. We are the ungodly ones who deny your love. We deny your law by our failure to live by it. We laugh at your promises. We appear more burdened than joyful in the midst of the wondrous gift of life. We seldom pause to give thanks. The compassion of Christ finds little echo in us, who claim to be Christians. We need your forgiveness, O God, and a new vision. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON:** God's favor rests on us. Sincere confession is met with caring acceptance. God hears the prayers of our hearts and grants us peace the world cannot give. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, that we might have access to the grace in which we stand. Lift up the cup of salvation and offer sacrifices of thanksgiving. God has loosened our bonds and freed us to share God's glory.

***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.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7
Isaac's birth announced

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he sat at the entrance of his tent in the day's heat. ² He looked up and suddenly saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from his tent entrance to greet them and bowed deeply. ³ He said, "Sirs, if you would be so kind, don't just pass by your servant. ⁴ Let a little water be brought so you may wash your feet and refresh yourselves under the tree. ⁵ Let me offer you a little bread so you will feel stronger, and after that you may leave your servant and go on your way—since you have visited your servant." They responded, "Fine. Do just as you have said."

⁶ So Abraham hurried to Sarah at his tent and said, "Hurry! Knead three seahs (a unit of dry measure of ancient origin found in the Bible; about 9 quarts) of the finest flour and make some baked goods!" ⁷ Abraham ran to the cattle, took a healthy young calf, and gave it to a young servant, who prepared it quickly. ⁸ Then Abraham took butter, milk, and the calf that had been prepared, put the food in front of them, and stood under the tree near them as they ate.

⁹ They said to him, "Where's your wife Sarah?" And he said, "Right here in the tent."

¹⁰ Then one of the men said, “I will definitely return to you about this time next year. Then your wife Sarah will have a son!”

Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were both very old. Sarah was no longer menstruating. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, “I’m no longer able to have children and my husband’s old.”

¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Me give birth? At my age?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too difficult for the LORD? When I return to you about this time next year, Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah lied and said, “I didn’t laugh,” because she was frightened. But he said, “No, you laughed.”

Isaac’s birth

²¹ The LORD was attentive to Sarah just as he had said, and the LORD carried out just what he had promised her. ² She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him. ³ Abraham named his son—the one Sarah bore him—Isaac. ⁴ Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old just as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. ⁶ Sarah said, “God has given me laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me.” ⁷ She said, “Who could have told Abraham that Sarah would

nurse sons? But now I’ve given birth to a son when he was old!”

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, we have peace with God

⁵ Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand through him, and we boast in the hope of God’s glory. ³ But not only that! We even take pride in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, ⁴ endurance produces character, and character produces hope. ⁵ This hope doesn’t put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶ While we were still weak, at the right moment, Christ died for ungodly people. ⁷ It isn’t often that someone will die for a righteous person, though maybe someone might dare to die for a good person. ⁸ But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: “ God can do the seemingly impossible”

Today we continue the story of Abraham, who obeyed God and was given whatever God promised.

First, I want to answer a query I mentioned last week. How old is the Old Testament? As we talked about last week, the Old Testament was not written down until 500 BC. But when did these events that we're reading about actually happen? The date of Creation can be derived by using the Creation account in Genesis 1, the genealogies found in Genesis 5 and Genesis 11, and so on.

Genesis 1 reveals there were five days prior to Adam's creation (he was created on the sixth day). Genesis 5 states that Adam lived 130 years prior to the birth of Seth (Genesis 1:3). Seth lived 105 years before the birth of Enosh (Genesis 5:6)—and so on down to the birth of Noah, which was approximately 1,056 years after creation. When we compare *Genesis 11* to Genesis 5:32, we learn that Shem was born when Noah was 502 (Genesis 11:10). Arphaxad was born when Shem was 100 (Genesis 11:10)—and so on down to Abram (Abraham), who was born approximately 2,000 years after Creation.

Scholars, both liberal and conservative, generally agree that Abraham was born about 2,000 years before Christ. We are now in the year 2023, so this is another 2,000 years. When we add the 2,000 from Adam to Abraham, the 2,000 from Abraham to Christ, and the 2,000 from Christ to the present day, we end up with about 6,000

years since Creation. (See "The World: Born in 4004 BC?")

That was the long answer. The short answer is creation happened in approximately 4000 BC and the events in the Book of Genesis lasted until 1800 BC.

The next thing I want to mention is that our Lectionary skips over many important events. You know how I am about everything chronologically. That's one of the reasons I want us to concentrate on the First Testament stories – WHAT HAPPENED WHEN?

Last week I also mentioned that there are two creation stories. The second one starts in Genesis 2:4. This is where we get the Adam and Eve story. Just to compare, in Genesis 1:26-27 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."²⁷ God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them." **Notice – men and women were created at the same time and both on God's own image.** That's why many believe that God could be female.

The second creation story begins in Genesis 2:4 ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created." There we can read the Adam and Eve story including the "the fall" which is written in chapter 3 of

Genesis. As in many places in our Bibles, even in the four gospels, stories are told differently because of who wrote them and their purpose or agenda for writing the story.

The other important stories that our lectionary left out include the sons of Adam and Eve, Cain, and Abel, in Genesis 4-6. Then God became saddened by the evil and sin in the world, God decided to start over. God flooded the earth. The only survivors were Noah, his family and two of every animal species. Notice that Noah obeyed God and after the flood God made a covenant or promise to Noah. Genesis 8:21 – 9:17. “²¹The LORD smelled the pleasing scent (of the refreshed earth), and the LORD **thought to himself**, I will not curse the fertile land anymore because of human beings since the ideas of the human mind are evil from their youth. I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done.” Then God made a covenant with Noah, that if Noah continues to obey God and care for the earth and all people, he will be blessed by God.

There is one more familiar story that happens in Genesis before the story of Abraham. That is the Tower of Babel. As the population began to increase after the flood, God commanded people to repopulate all of the earth. Instead of obeying, they settled on a plain in

Shinar. Because stone was scarce in the area, they developed the technology to make bricks and constructed a city. Motivated by pride and the desire to establish some kind of powerful humanistic empire, the rebels erected a skyscraper type of temple-tower in the city center. To stop them, God confused them with different languages and forced them to scatter all over the world. The tower was given the name Babel which means “confusion” in Hebrew.

Now we are caught up, but did you notice the theme of each story? What’s the moral of each story, as Aesop says? We should remember that we are part of this whole story. Even though the story began 6000 years ago, we are players in the great drama of “life with our Creator.” What “role” are we playing in God’s world?

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Omnipresent God, we pray for the coming of the time of universal restoration that you announced long ago. We pray that times of refreshing may come from your presence and that the Spirit’s presence in the church may be more manifest in the world to the glory of the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant zeal to your church in telling the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that even though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich. Through

your church enrich the poor of the world with this great treasure of your grace.

As you have promised, dwell with your people, O God. Be light, joy, and peace in them by the Spirit that our homes may be rich in your wisdom, fragrant with prayer, and full of the music of praise. May our children grow up in the love that flows from you that knowing you, the Source of life and love, they may tap that resource all their lifetime.

We remember today those who are ill, sick, recovering, lonely, grieving, and dealing with mental issues. We pray you defend the innocent, deliver the tempted, and rescue those entrapped by evil and addiction. Let no trial of faith shake or embitter your children, but bring them through their ordeal purified and made stronger in their trust in you.

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

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. 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: What shall we return to God for all the bounty we have received? Everything we have comes from God and is but lent to us for a time. Let us offer a thanksgiving sacrifice, rejoicing in the opportunity to share in bringing in the harvest for God.

***UNISON OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

We repeat our vows of commitment to you, gracious God, as we dedicate this offering. We are disciples of Jesus Christ, commissioned to share the good news. May all that we dedicate here – our abilities, the fleeting moments of our days, the resources entrusted to our management – announce your reign and the nearness of your dominion. We give with joy and serve with delight, thanking you for this opportunity to share what you have given. Amen.

***RESPONSIVE COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

ONE: Go out, prepared each day for God's appearing. Recognize the Christ within and among us.

MANY: Surely God is present wherever we go. God listens and responds to our prayers.

ONE: The harvest is plentiful but laborers are few. Ask God to send the laborers who are needed.

MANY: As we are able, we will serve. God will empower our witness and ministry.

ONE: We have peace with God through Jesus Christ. God's love has been poured into our hearts.

MANY: We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We carry God's grace into the world.

Amen. **Amen.**

PRAYER LIST: Mari Ella Gianino, Carson Edwards, Bill Donovan, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Marilyn Paul, Beth Sheldon, Mary Holcomb, Syd Safriet, Ronald Bopp, Rosemary Williams, Becky Ballard, David Seneczyn, Urban Baum.

CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF

Christoffer Galey, son of Bruce and Penny Wagner.