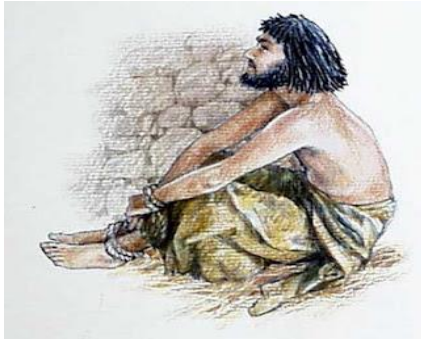


SUNDAY, JULY 14, 2024 10 AM
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
MARK 6:14-29



ST. JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431
*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in bold print

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

PRELUDE: “Amazing Grace” Lani Smith

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Hoyleton Ministries

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

(Inspired by Psalm 85:8-13)

One: Let us turn our hearts to hear from the Holy One!

Many: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will embrace.

One: Let us turn our hearts to gain insight from the Holy One!

Many: Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

One: Let us turn our hearts to receive from the Holy One!

Many: Righteousness will go before them, and will make a path for their steps.

***INVOCATION:**

God Among Us, your ways are perfect and your laws are just. We gather today in your name and for your kingdom. May it come wherever and whenever two or more gather in your name. May our hearts open and our understanding expand with the vision of

righteousness. May our worship please you, transform us, and bear witness to your love. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 237**

“I Come to the Garden Alone”

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

Righteous God, you have created us in your image to reflect your holiness. You have affirmed the goodness within us. We struggle to be the people you call us to be. You have given us the guidance of the Law and the wisdom of the Prophets and the gift of your Presence. Still, we struggle against the pull to go our own direction without your counsel. We fail to extend the grace and compassion you give to us. Be merciful in your judgment while holding us accountable for your justice as we strive to live the fullness of life in you. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, you were not made to be perfect; you were created to be good. In hope, we affirm that God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. Lean into the power of God to do the work that we cannot, to meet us at our point of need, and to lead us into the path of new life.

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

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

(From the Message)

6 ¹⁻² David mustered the pick of the troops of Israel—thirty divisions of them. Together with his soldiers, David headed for Baalah to recover the Chest of God, which was called by the Name GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, who was enthroned over the pair of angels on the Chest.

³⁻⁷ They placed the Chest of God on a brand-new oxcart and removed it from Abinadab’s house on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab’s sons, were driving the new cart loaded with the Chest of God, Ahio in the lead and Uzzah alongside the Chest. David and the whole company of Israel were in the parade, singing at the top of their lungs and playing mandolins, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, so Uzzah reached out and grabbed the Chest of God. GOD blazed in anger against Uzzah and struck him hard because he had

profaned the Chest. Uzzah died on the spot, right alongside the Chest.

¹²⁻¹⁶ It was reported to King David that GOD had prospered Obed-Edom and his entire household because of the Chest of God. So David thought, "I'll get that blessing for myself," and went and brought up the Chest of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David, celebrating extravagantly all the way, with frequent sacrifices of choice bulls. David, ceremonially dressed in priest's linen, danced with great abandon before GOD. The whole country was with him as he accompanied the Chest of GOD with shouts and trumpet blasts. But as the Chest of GOD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, happened to be looking out a window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before GOD, her heart filled with scorn.

¹⁷⁻¹⁹ They brought the Chest of GOD and set it in the middle of the tent pavilion that David had pitched for it. Then and there David worshiped, offering burnt offerings and peace offerings. When David had completed the sacrifices of burnt and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies and handed out to each person in the crowd, men and women alike, a loaf of bread, a date cake, and a raisin cake. Then everyone went home.

EPISTLE LESSON: Ephesians 1:3-14

The Believers' Blessings

³ Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven. ⁴ God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God's presence before the creation of the world. ⁵ God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan ⁶ and to honor his glorious grace that he has given to us freely through the Son whom he loves. ⁷ We have been ransomed through his Son's blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace, ⁸ which he poured over us with wisdom and understanding. ⁹ God revealed his hidden design^[a] to us, which is according to his goodwill and the plan that he intended to accomplish through his Son. ¹⁰ This is what God planned for the climax of all times:^[b] to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven along with the things on earth. ¹¹ We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. ¹² We are called to be an honor to God's glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. ¹³ You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with

the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. ¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 6:14-29**

Death of John the Baptist

¹⁴ Herod the king heard about these things, because the name of Jesus had become well-known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and this is why miraculous powers are at work through him." ¹⁵ Others were saying, "He is Elijah." Still others were saying, "He is a prophet like one of the ancient prophets." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard these rumors, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised to life." ¹⁷ He said this because Herod himself had arranged to have John arrested and put in prison because of Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother Philip. Herod had married her, ¹⁸ but John told Herod, "It's against the law for you to marry your brother's wife!" ¹⁹ So Herodias had it in for John. She wanted to kill him, but she couldn't. ²⁰ This was because Herod respected John. He regarded him as a righteous and holy person, so he protected him. John's words greatly confused Herod, yet he enjoyed listening to him.

²¹ Finally, the time was right. It was on one of Herod's birthdays, when he had prepared a feast for his high-ranking officials and military officers and Galilee's leading residents. ²² Herod's daughter Herodias^[a] came in and danced, thrilling Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the young woman, "Ask me whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." ²³ Then he swore to her, "Whatever you ask I will give to you, even as much as half of my kingdom." ²⁴ She left the banquet hall and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" "John the Baptist's head," Herodias replied. ²⁵ Hurrying back to the ruler, she made her request: "I want you to give me John the Baptist's head on a plate, right this minute." ²⁶ Although the king was upset, because of his solemn pledge and his guests, he didn't want to refuse her. ²⁷ So he ordered a guard to bring John's head. The guard went to the prison, cut off John's head, ²⁸ brought his head on a plate, and gave it to the young woman, and she gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When John's disciples heard what had happened, they came and took his dead body and laid it in a tomb.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

MESSAGE: “Extra! Extra! Read all about it!!”

What sells newspaper? I think the saying is, “if it bleeds, it leads.” Sex, is up there, of course. Religion used to be a front page story, but not so much anymore. However, people are still aware that there are unanswered questions out there, and if someone who seems to be an authentic spokesperson for God, might make the bottom of the front page. Lately, Royalty has become front page news in newspapers across the world. And of course, a good scandal always makes for exciting reading.

I just read the story of Herod, his wife Herodias, the daughter Salome, and John the Baptizer. I think it covers it all; sex, blood, scandal, royalty, religion. Now, we put this package together and locate it in first-century Galilee.

Privacy is a rather new phenomenon in our world. Gossiping is cruel. We try to avoid it. We wait for facts. That was not the norm in Galilee at the time of Jesus.

There’s nothing private about this story of Herod and John the Baptizer. It would have been round the palace within minutes, round the neighborhood by morning and round all of Galilee within a day or two. The average person knew who John was. All of Galilee and Judea had gone for baptism - you can just hear the whispers, the rumors, the shaking of

heads, the mutterings that no good would come of Herod’s beheading of John. Actually within a decade, Herod had been banished to faraway Gaul, left to die in disgrace in a distant land. You see, Herod was very free with a sword to kill whomever got in his way to be king of the Jews. Including his own family. Within a generation, John’s story had been written up by the author of the Gospel of Mark, honoring John as a fearless witness to the kingdom of God.

Herod, following his equally evil father, cherished a great ambition: to have Jews recognize him as their true king. Though in hindsight we can see there was never a chance of this, even though he was completing his father’s great project of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem.

John the Baptist, though, was launching a very different kind of kingdom – movement. His baptism, offering forgiveness of sins, was effectively upstaging the Temple itself. His promise of a Coming One who was about to appear, spoke of a figure very different from Herod. Would God’s anointed one really behave in such a fashion? A Messiah marrying his brother’s wife, which was illegal and immoral?

We aren’t told what John said as the executioner came for him. This isn’t a story, like many other Jewish stories of righteous men brutally killed, of a martyr who took the opportunity for a speech

affirming his message and warning of God's vengeance. John didn't get that chance. But Mark leaves his readers in no doubt. John was a righteous and holy man, and the kingdom of which he had spoken, and the forgiveness he had offered, were the reality that would win the day. Even in so solemn and ugly a story, there can be found real encouragement to faithful witness and constant hope.

Faithful witness and constant hope. That's our part in this story. We are being called to faithful witness in our love for Jesus and our constant hope that God's kingdom will be with us forever. Amen.

**SPEICAL MUSIC: "Be Still My Soul" Video
by the Eclipse group**

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Giver of life for all creation, we are grateful for the ways you sustain us in good days and bad. You remain with us no matter what keeping us safe and comforted in your arms of love.

Unfortunately, we are worriers; we worry about our health, our finances, our families, our friends, and we worry about the state of our world. We have not been good stewards of your world in nature or in the world of people. It all belongs to you, but we act

as if none of it matters to us and we destroy it.

Forgive us. Have mercy on us when we are not kind to your world or to others.

We pray for all those in need of healing, from injuries, surgeries, illness, grieving loneliness, and addiction. Please send your Holy Spirit to comfort all those who seek you.

Today we remember all the firefighters who are struggling with fires all across the world. We pray for doctors and all those trained to care for others. We remember members of our militaries who are striving to bring peace to our world.

Be with us as we pray the prayer your son taught us .

. .

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.

**PRAYER RESPONSE: 775 "Eagle's Wings"
And God will raise you up on eagle's wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,**

and hold you in the palm of God's hand.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

God has planted generosity within our beings. The gifts we receive are not for holding and creating idols, they are for the work of the kingdom, the building of beloved community, and manifesting God's abundance so that all may be well and whole.

OFFERTORY: "Abiding Faith" Louis E. Stairs

***DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

Holy One, we thank you for the gifts of life and living. We give thanks by bringing our resources to the community, to be shared and used for your kingdom, in our ministry, and for the world we inhabit. Bless and facilitate our generosity beyond our imagination. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 423 "Great Is Your Faithfulness"**

***BENEDICTION:**

Be assured of the Holy One's abiding love for you and all creation. Hold fast to hope and share the blessing of the Spirit's direction, Christ's presence, and the Sustainer's peace.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE:

"Let There Be Peace on Earth"

POSTLUDE: "Exaltation" Robert J. Hughes