

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2024
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MARK 2:23–3:6
THEME: *SABBATH*



ST. JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in bold print

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

PRELUDE: “As the Deer with Fairest Lord Jesus”
Mark Hayes

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Emmaus Homes

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

(Psalm 139:1-5,14 adapted)

Leader: Holy One, you have searched and known us.

People: You know when we sit down and when we rise up; you discern our thoughts.

L: You search out our paths and our lying downs and are acquainted with all my ways.

P: Even before a word is on our tongues, O Holy One, you know it completely.

L: You hem us in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon us.

P: We praise you, for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that we know very well.

***INVOCATION: (based on Deuteronomy 5:12)**

We are called to “observe the Sabbath day and keep it

holy, as our God commanded us.” Be with us Holy One, so that we may be refreshed and renewed. May the Holy Spirit descend upon us as we gather in worship and praise, for all you do in Jesus’ name. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 451 “Be Thou My Vision”**

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

As we gather in worship, let us take this moment to consider our needs for transformation and forgiveness. I invite you to quietly reflect on our need for grace.

People: Dear God, the creator of all things based on love. You created us in your image of love and there have been times we have fallen short of that love, not only to you but to each other and all of creation. I ask for your forgiveness and from you, present today, my siblings, sisters, and brothers in Christ. I thank you for the comforting strength and compassion of the Holy Spirit to do better in bringing love and grace and all I do. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Scripture tells us “Light will shine out of darkness,” and though we may be “afflicted in every way, we are not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair” and when we turn to God for blessed grace; grace is always granted. Amen.

***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: 1 Samuel 3:1-20

3 Now the boy Samuel was serving the LORD under Eli. The LORD’s word was rare at that time, and visions weren’t widely known. **2** One day Eli, whose eyes had grown so weak he was unable to see, was lying down in his room. **3** God’s lamp hadn’t gone out yet, and Samuel was lying down in the LORD’s temple, where God’s chest^[a] was. **4** The LORD called to Samuel. “I’m here,” he said. **5** Samuel hurried to Eli and said, “I’m here. You called me?” “I didn’t call you,” Eli replied. “Go lie down.” So he did. **6** Again the LORD called Samuel, so Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, “I’m here. You called me?” “I didn’t call, my son,” Eli replied. “Go and lie down.” (**7** Now Samuel didn’t yet know the LORD, and the LORD’s word hadn’t yet been revealed to him.) **8** A third time the LORD called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, “I’m here. You called me?” Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy. **9** So Eli said to Samuel, “Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD. Your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down where he’d been.

¹⁰ Then the LORD came and stood there, calling just as before, “Samuel, Samuel!”

Samuel said, “Speak. Your servant is listening.”

¹¹ The LORD said to Samuel, “I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of all who hear it tingle! ¹² On that day, I will bring to pass against Eli everything I said about his household—every last bit of it! ¹³ I told him that I would punish his family forever because of the wrongdoing he knew about—how his sons were cursing God, but he wouldn’t stop them. ¹⁴ Because of that I swore about Eli’s household that his family’s wrongdoing will never be reconciled by sacrifice or by offering.”

¹⁵ Samuel lay there until morning, then opened the doors of the LORD’s house. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ But Eli called Samuel, saying: “Samuel, my son!” “I’m here,” Samuel said. ¹⁷ “What did he say to you?” Eli asked. “Don’t hide anything from me. May God deal harshly with you and worse still if you hide from me a single word from everything he said to you.” ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. “He is the LORD,” Eli said. “He will do as he pleases.”

¹⁹ So Samuel grew up, and the LORD was with him, not allowing any of his words to fail. ²⁰ All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was trustworthy as the LORD’s prophet.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

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EPISTLE LESSON: 2 Corinthians 4:5-12

⁵ We don’t preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. ⁶ God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Physical bodies and eternal glory ⁷ But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn’t come from us. ⁸ We are experiencing all kinds of trouble, but we aren’t crushed. We are confused, but we aren’t depressed. ⁹ We are harassed, but we aren’t abandoned. We are knocked down, but we aren’t knocked out. ¹⁰ We always carry Jesus’ death around in our bodies so that Jesus’ life can also be seen in our bodies. ¹¹ We who are alive are always being handed over to death for Jesus’ sake so that Jesus’ life can also be seen in our bodies that are dying. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 2:23—3:6**

Scripture and the Sabbath

²³ Jesus went through the wheat fields on the Sabbath. As the disciples made their way, they were picking the heads of wheat. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to Jesus, “Look! Why are they breaking the Sabbath law?” ²⁵ He said to them, “Haven’t you ever read what David did when he was in need, when he and those with him were hungry? ²⁶ During the time when Abiathar was high priest, David went into God’s house and ate the bread of the presence, which only the priests were allowed to eat. He also gave bread to those who were with him.” ²⁷ Then he said, “The Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren’t created for the Sabbath. ²⁸ This is why the Human One is Lord even over the Sabbath.”

Healing on the Sabbath

3 Jesus returned to the synagogue. A man with a withered hand was there. ² Wanting to bring charges against Jesus, they were watching Jesus closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. ³ He said to the man with the withered hand, “Step up where people can see you.” ⁴ Then he said to them, “Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they said nothing. ⁵ Looking around at them with anger, deeply grieved at their unyielding hearts, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he did, and his hand was made healthy. ⁶ At that, the Pharisees got together

with the supporters of Herod to plan how to destroy Jesus.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen

MESSAGE: Have you ever heard the expression, “a sacred cow.” It means a rule, tradition, or practice that has been done forever and no one can remember why or perhaps the reason to follow that rule has long past over. Or perhaps it could be a burdensome practice that is being done and a simple fix would not make it necessary. Yet nobody thinks about the fix and just continues to do the sacred cow practice.

One such instance comes to my mind. On a particular floor at a hospital somewhere, the patients were always receiving their medications late. The Head Nurse decided to watch the nurses as they prepared their medications for distribution. All the nurses were crowded into a very small room where the medication cart was stored when not in use. There were even nurses waiting outside this small room for their turn to squeeze into the room to prepare their medications. All this crowding caused many patients to receive their medications late. After seeing this, the Head Nurse asked the nurses, “the medicine cart has wheels and is designed to be rolled into the hall so that everyone

could prepare their medications at the same time. Why are you leaving it in this small storage room?" she asked. Finally, one nurse spoke up. "One of the wheels is broken so it can't be rolled out to the hall." She reassured the Head Nurse that they had sent a work order down to maintenance weeks ago, but no one had come to fix the broken wheel. Instead of sending another work order or making a phone call to maintenance, they just left the cart in the store room. It had become a sacred cow.

In the June newsletter I wrote an article about the sacred cows at the time of Jesus and why they were developed. Today's scripture passage contains a few. Let's look at just one.

"One Sabbath day Jesus was going through the corn fields. His disciples were hungry and they began to pluck the ears of corn as they made their way along. The Pharisees began to say to Jesus, "Look! Why are they doing what is not allowed on the Sabbath?"

Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees the story concerning the great soldier David before he became their king written in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David was fleeing for his life, he came to the tabernacle in Nob. He demanded food and there was none except the shewbread. This bread was a kind of offering to God. It was changed once a week; and the older bread became the property of the priests and of the priests alone, and

no one else might eat it. This is written in Leviticus 24:9. Yet, in his time of need David took and ate that bread. Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees that scripture itself supplies a precedent over human and even divine law. Jesus says, "the Sabbath was made for the sake of man and not man for the sake of the Sabbath." Human life was created before ever the elaborate Sabbath law came into existence. Human beings were not created to be the victims and the slaves of Sabbath rules and regulations, which were in the beginning created to make life fuller and better for them. Men and women are not to be enslaved by the Sabbath; the Sabbath exists to make their lives better.

Dr. William Barclay observes that this passage confronts us with certain essential truths which we forget at our peril. #1. Religion does not consist in rules and regulations. Sunday observance is important, but there is a great deal more to religion than Sunday observance. Dr. Barclay says, "If it were possible to become a Christian simply by abstaining from work and pleasure on the Sunday, and by attending church on that day, and saying prayers and reading the Bible, being a Christian would be a very easy thing." Do you agree? Whenever we forget the love and the forgiveness and the service and the mercy that are at the heart of religion and replace them by the performance of rules and regulations, religion is in a decline. Christianity has

at all times consisted far more in doing things than in refraining from doing things.” Think about that for a minute.

Dr. Barclay has a lot to say on this subject that I’ll leave for another day. However, here is one last statement of his. “The best way to use sacred things is to use them to help each other.”

I sure hope they got that wheel fixed on that medicine cart. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: Video of St. John Choir singing “Here I Am Lord” (This is from 1 Samuel 3:1-20)

PASTORAL PRAYER: Gracious Creator of us all, we thank you for sharing your Son Jesus with us. It’s hard to think about what our lives would be like if Jesus had not come into our hearts. We are so grateful that you have shown us the way of light and love.

We wish the world could experience the peace you have to offer, dear God, but some people in authority think they know best and if anyone disagrees, kill those who disagree. Those who war with others don’t seem to care how many people are killed, as long as they get their way, just like toddlers who don’t want to share their toys.

Send your Holy Spirit to open their eyes and hearts.

We pray for all those who are suffering from oppression, those in poverty, those who seek justice, those who are hurting, those who suffer from mental illness or disability. Send your healing spirit to give them relief.

We pray for all those affected by the storms, tornadoes and floods going on in our world right now. Those with water in their basement and those who have completely lost their homes. Send your people to give the assistance needed.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus, our savior,

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: 773

Remember me, remember me, O Jesus, remember me.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY: We are grateful for the gifts that we receive in our lives. We invite you to participate in this opportunity of generosity to continue

the mission of God's Love to the world. We are grateful and thankful.

OFFERTORY: "Jesus Is All the World to Me"

Robert J. Hughes

***DOXOLOGY:**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God for all that love has done;

Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

O Holy One, with gratefulness we offer and dedicate these gifts for the continuation of our work in Christ's Name. Amen.

***HOLY COMMUNION:**

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the God of the Feast be with you.

And also with you.

Offer your hearts to our God, dear ones.

We do so, that God's light might shine in them.

Sing praises to God who loves us.

We rejoice in the One who invites us to this Table.

From the hollowness of chaos, Imaginative God, you fearfully and wonderfully made all things:

lightning that flashes on mountaintops,
thunder that echoes off valley floors,
snakes that slither through mud, dogs that keep a watchful eye while we sleep.

We were intricately woven in your image,
as you longed for us to be with your forever, but sin seemed too wonderful to us, and we followed it towards death.

You sent trustworthy women and men to offer your invitation to come home, but we let their words drop from our ears and shatter on the ground.

Grieving over the hardness of our hearts, you sent your Child to us, your treasure in human form.

With all those who have found you,
with those who continue to search,
we lift our voices in thanksgiving:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God of delight.

All your wonder-filled works offer you praise.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes searching for us.

Hosanna in the highest!

You are holy, yet know us intimately, God of love, which is why you shared Jesus with us. Noticing where we went wrong, he came to put us back on the right path to you.

Seeing we were burdened with our foolish choices, he came, to take that weight off of us.

Knowing that our lives would be withered by death, he went to the cross, so your healing resurrection might be offered to all.

While we are afflicted, we are not crushed;
while we are knocked down, we cannot be destroyed;
while it is a mystery, we still proclaim our faith:

**Christ died, carrying our death with him;
Christ was raised, bringing new life for all;
Christ will come, revealing your glory.**

We remember, the night before Jesus would be betrayed and crucified, that he sat among his friends and took bread, blessed, and broke it, and said "Take and eat for this is my body given for you. As often as you do it do it in remembrance of me".

After the supper had ended, Jesus took the cup, blessed it and said, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

My friends, whenever we share this bread and cup, we remember the compassion and love Jesus taught and the call to follow Christ in all we do.

Let us pray. Holy Creator, we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, and all who follow to bring love and justice to the

world. May this bread and drink nourish us as they are the symbol of Christ's essence in all of us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

Eternal God, we thank you for your presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. By the power of your Holy Spirit, unite us with all whom Christ welcomes, that we may be the servant church of the servant Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 455 "I Am Yours, O Lord"**

***BENEDICTION:**

Dear friends, we have been nourished and renewed in this Sabbath day with the love of God who created us, God who redeemed us, and God who sustains us. Go in peace, sharing the Good News. Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE: "Let There Be Peace on Earth"**

POSTLUDE: "Beside the Still Waters" Lewis W. Gale