

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024
SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
LUKE 24:44-53



St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail Fairview Heights, IL

Telephone 618-397-6323

e-mail– stjohnuccfairview@gmail.com

Website: www.stjohnfairview.org

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Organist – Sharon Banjavcic

Liturgy – Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey

Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Let us praise God for sending Jesus Christ to offer his saving love to us all.

All: We give God all our praises.

One: Let our hearts be filled with joyful celebration for the fulfillment of God's promises.

All: We open our hearts to receive the joy of Christ.

One: Let us move forward with Jesus Christ as our guiding light.

All: The light of Jesus Christ is shining in each of us.

One: Come, let us worship our Risen Christ, whose love and light guide us still.

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION:** Ever present God, we are grateful that you meet us right where we are. Speaking our language and giving us the blessed assurance that you are with us. We look forward to the glory that awaits us, trusting that Christ will guide us to our heavenly home. In his name, we pray. Amen.

***PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**

Life-giving God, we find joy in your newness of life through Jesus Christ. Help us to feel the joy of inhaling and exhaling the breath of life in every season.

Transform us when we come together as your beloved and diverse creation. Guide us in our praise as we seek your saving love toward a world where there is peace and justice for all. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Loving God, in Christ we see the fulfillment of your promise to be with us always. Forgive us when we lose faith in your compassion for all creation. Help us to see the great sacrifice of the Risen Christ as an example of your undying love for us all. Strengthen us to do better and to become better together in our relationship with you and all of creation. Hear our prayer, O God. 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: Acts 1:1-11

The risen Jesus with his disciples

1 Theophilus, the first scroll I wrote concerned everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning, ² right up to the day when he was taken up into heaven. Before he was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles he had chosen. ³ After his suffering, he showed them that he was alive with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God's kingdom. ⁴ While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, "This is what you heard from me: ⁵ John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶ As a result, those who had gathered together asked Jesus, "Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?"

⁷ Jesus replied, "It isn't for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

⁹ After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going away and as they were staring toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. ¹¹ They said, "Galileans, why are you standing here, looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you saw him go into heaven."

EPISTLE READING: Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁵ Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, this is the reason that ¹⁶ I don't stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God's call, what is the richness of

God's glorious inheritance among believers,¹⁹ and what is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of God's powerful strength.²⁰ God's power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God's right side in the heavens,²¹ far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future.²² God put everything under Christ's feet and made him head of everything in the church,²³ which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 24:44-53**

⁴⁴ Jesus said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled."⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.⁴⁶ He said to them, "This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ Look, I'm sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power."

Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰ He led them out as far as Bethany, where he lifted his hands and blessed them.⁵¹ As he blessed them, he left them and was taken up to heaven.⁵² They worshipped

him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy.⁵³ And they were continuously in the temple praising God.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen

MESSAGE: "Being Transformed"

After all Jesus had done, plus the Transfiguration, healings, teachings, crucifixion, resurrection, and appearing to the disciples, the end of his ministry is described in one sentence; "he blessed them and was taken up to be with his Father." It seems a little anti-climatic to me. I mean, where's the brass band, or angels singing the Hallelujah Chorus? Jesus did not go "out with a bang", as they say.

I was most impressed by the Disciples. They seemed changed. When Jesus first called them was when we first met them. They seemed like excited but clumsy school boys. "But we fished over there all night and caught no fish. Why should we try again as you said, Jesus?" "You want **us** to feed all these people?" "You want us to love our enemies?" "You want a tax collector to join us?" "We want to sit at your left and right when you come into your glory." "Jesus, are you going to let this storm kill us?" "Jesus, I want to walk on water like you do." "No, Jesus, we will not let you be arrested and killed. That won't happen!"

You can probably think of a few more times the Disciples didn't understand Jesus and stumbled. But look

at this passage I read. ⁵² They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy. ⁵³ And they were continuously in the temple praising God.

I expected them to cry or tell Jesus not to leave them. Something had changed in the disciples. After following Jesus the past three years or so, listening to him, watching him, seeing how he comforts the people, they seem to understand who he truly is. They are no longer afraid. They are confident. They are joyous. They have been transformed by this man, Jesus.

You and I have followed Jesus more than three years, I think it is safe to say. As we hear and read the scriptures, sing praises to him, spend time in prayer, donate to missions, bring food for the food pantry, call shut-ins, send greeting cards, and more, I believe we are being transformed every day just like the Disciples. We are no longer afraid. We are confident. And we are joyous. Jesus has touched so many people, not just the disciples and us, but many, many, many more. We may wish we could see him in the flesh right before us, yet we know his presence is always with us.

Have we been transformed by this man? Try to count how many ways. Amen

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.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

One: From the abundance of God's generosity, all are invited to offer a portion of our gifts.

All: We offer these offerings to Christ's church.

One: Remembering the great love that Christ has for all people,

All: We give these gifts to further spread the love of Christ in the world.

One: Blessing those who gave, and those unable to give.

All: We receive joy in this moment of giving.

One: May these offerings help fulfill our hope to be Christ's love and light in the world.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

Faithful God, we thank you for every gift. We delight in returning a portion of what we have been given back to Christ's church. Your generous love and care for all creation knows no bounds. Like Christ who offered himself, let these offerings symbolize the fulfillment of your love by bringing a healing balm of hope, peace, and justice to everyone, everywhere. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

***BENEDICTION:**

Let us pray this prayer that can be sung in a round afterward, "Go, now in peace. May the love of God surround you, everywhere you may go." Amen

PRAYER LIST: Becky Ballard, Urban Baum, Ronald Bopp. Ginny Ganschietz, Sue Ganschietz, Marilyn Paul, Syd Safriet, David Senneczyn, Yvonne Weber, Joan Williams.