

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2024
TWENTY-FORTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
MARK 12:28-34 | "YOU SHALL LOVE"



The Shema is the Jewish prayer spoken every morning and evening, plus it is on the scroll in the mezuzah door box.

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. Cheryl A. Lindsay

Communion Liturgy – Rev. Mary Scifres

Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love"
Mark Hayes

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Neighbors in Need

***CALL TO WORSHIP: (Inspired by Psalm 146)**

One: Praise the Holy One as long as we live.

Many: Praise the Creator, who makes our days, who trails our paths, and who gives us breath.

One: Praise the Holy One with our whole selves—mind, body, and soul.

Many: Trust in wisdom and honor, truth and love, grace and mercy.

One: Praise the Holy One for God is just, generous, compassionate, liberating, and near.

Many: The Holy One reigns, lifting up the lowly, humbling, the proud, and sustaining the righteous from generation to generation. Praise God!

***INVOCATION:**

Loving God, what joy it is to know your name. To know that when we call, you answer. When we seek you, we

find you. When we long for you, we discover that you are already with us. Anchor our lives in your presence. Encourage us beyond our fear. Remind us of your goodness and miraculous works. Reaffirm the power you have made available and at work within us. Fortify us as your people who give and receive your love to your glory. In your name, we pray. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 43 “Love Divine All Love Excelling”**

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

Righteous One, write your commandments on our hearts...not as a list of do’s and don’ts but as a vision of the people who can be, the lives we may live, and the world we may create. Write liberation of the oppressed, care and wholeness of those with unmet needs, and revelation and understanding to those oblivious to the truth. Emblazon your law of love in our hearts, on our lips, and in our journey. Transform us with your love so that we may reflect your love toward our neighbor and toward ourselves. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, you are loved, and you have power to choose love in every moment and every encounter. Love has the power to lift, to heal, and to change. Let Holy Love move the mountains before you and the valleys within you.

***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: First Testament, Ruth 1:1-18
From the Message**

I want to mention a few things about this story. No one knows when it was written or exactly when it took place. However, we can read Matthew’s interpretation of Jesus’ genealogy in chapter 1:5-7. Note that Boaz is the man Ruth marries in Bethlehem.

⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.

Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse.

⁶ Jesse was the father of David the king.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.

⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.

So we can see why Ruth is important.

1 ¹⁻² Once upon a time—it was back in the days when judges led Israel—there was a famine in the land. A man from Bethlehem in Judah left home to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The man’s

name was Elimelech; his wife's name was Naomi; his sons were named Mahlon and Kilion—all Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They all went to the country of Moab and settled there.

³⁻⁵ Elimelech died and Naomi was left, she and her two sons. The sons took Moabite wives; the name of the first was Orpah, the second Ruth. They lived there in Moab for the next ten years. But then the two brothers, Mahlon and Kilion, died. Now the woman was left without either her young men or her husband.

⁶⁻⁷ One day she got herself together, she and her two daughters-in-law, to leave the country of Moab and set out for home; she had heard that God had been pleased to visit his people and give them food. And so she started out from the place she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law with her, on the road back to the land of Judah.

⁸⁻⁹ After a short while on the road, Naomi told her two daughters-in-law, "Go back. Go home and live with your mothers. And may God treat you as graciously as you treated your deceased husbands and me. May God give each of you a new home and a new husband!" She kissed them and they cried openly.

¹⁰ They said, "No, we're going on with you to your people."

¹¹⁻¹³ But Naomi was firm: "Go back, my dear daughters. Why would you come with me? Do you suppose I still have sons in my womb who can become your future

husbands? Go back, dear daughters—on your way, please! I'm too old to get a husband. Why, even if I said, 'There's still hope!' and this very night got a man and had sons, can you imagine being satisfied to wait until they were grown? Would you wait that long to get married again? No, dear daughters; this is a bitter pill for me to swallow—more bitter for me than for you. God has dealt me a hard blow."

¹⁴ Again they cried openly. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye; but Ruth embraced her and held on.

¹⁵ Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back home to live with her own people and gods; go with her."

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ But Ruth said, "Don't force me to leave you; don't make me go home. Where you go, I go; and where you live, I'll live. Your people are my people, your God is my god; where you die, I'll die, and that's where I'll be buried, so help me God—not even death itself is going to come between us!"

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ When Naomi saw that Ruth had her heart set on going with her, she gave in. And so the two of them traveled on together to Bethlehem.

When they arrived in Bethlehem the whole town was soon buzzing: "Is this really our Naomi? And after all this time!"

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 146:1-10 Page 719

SECOND TESTAMENT: Hebrews 9:11-14

¹¹ But Christ has appeared as the high priest of the good things that have happened. He passed through the greater and more perfect meeting tent, which isn't made by human hands (that is, it's not a part of this world). ¹² He entered the holy of holies once for all by his own blood, not by the blood of goats or calves, securing our deliverance for all time. ¹³ If the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of cows made spiritually contaminated people holy and clean, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Jesus wash our consciences clean from dead works in order to serve the living God? He offered himself to God through the eternal Spirit as a sacrifice without any flaw.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 12:28-34**

God's most important command

²⁸ One of the legal experts heard their dispute and saw how well Jesus answered them. He came over and asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

²⁹ Jesus replied, "The most important one is *Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord*, ³⁰ *and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* ³¹ The second is this, *You will love your neighbor as yourself.* No other commandment is greater than these."

³² The legal expert said to him, "Well said, Teacher. You have truthfully said that God is one and there is no other besides him. ³³ And to love God with all of the heart, a

full understanding, and all of one's strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more important than all kinds of entirely burned offerings and sacrifices."

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered with wisdom, he said to him, "You aren't far from God's kingdom." After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "Love Stories"

Today we have two love stories. The first is the love story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth. The second love story has more significance to the whole Israel history and continuity; Christianity and Judaism. The story focuses on the heart of both: love of God and love of neighbor. As Christianity spread in the first and second century, many people forgot that Judaism and Christianity had at least one thing in common; the importance of Love.

As Paul wrote in Romans 13:9, "the commandments "are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself". In fact, the Old Testament readings remind us that not every Israelite experienced the LAW as oppressive, breeding despair and hypocritical displays of religion. And our Gospel reminds us that even in contexts of disputes with Jewish leaders, Jesus claimed and affirmed the fundamental tenets of his tradition. Too

often Christians forget this, creating generalized and largely false dichotomies between law and gospel, work and faith, act and motive. Who knew the word “love” could cause such divisions?

The scribe who approaches Jesus with a question is presented in a positive light. How often does that happen? Of the nineteen references to scribes in Mark, this one is alone in that regard. After a series of entrapment questions from Pharisees Herodians, and Sadducees, the sincerity and perception of this scribe are welcomed. His question was appropriate to Judaism’s continued reflection upon its tradition and faith in the effort to keep perspective and not to stray from the center.

It would be totally inaccurate, therefore, to portray Jesus as the first to understand the point of Judaism. In fact, by his citations from Deuteronomy and Leviticus and by his agreement with the scribe that these take precedence over rituals, Jesus places himself in the prophetic tradition that included Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos. **Law can lose its heart; ritual can lose its reason; a relationship can lose its love.** (Dr. Gene M. Tucker). But both Mark and we know all too well that Judaism has no monopoly on such distortions of faith.

The scribe agrees with Jesus, and Jesus agrees with the scribe. It is a rare and pleasant moment. But agreeing is not enough. The scribe is “not far from the kingdom of God” (verse 34). Like the rich man in an

earlier story, the scribe is lacking something. God Mark, it is following Jesus on the way and all the way to the cross. The kingdom of God is not agreeing on the right answers, important as the search for truth is. It is rather living, doing, and relating in ways that the love of God and love of neighbor inspire, inform, and discipline. THAT’S WHY LOVE IS IMPORTANT. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: “More Love to Thee” Video

PASTORAL PRAYER: Gracious and ever loving God, we come to you this morning for many things on our hearts. In our world of deceit and lying, it’s difficult to tell who is with and who isn’t. There’s too much bickering at our nation’s capital. Instead of finding ways to help the citizens of this country, it seems like the politicians just want to find ways to disgrace their colleagues. Please remind those in charge of our country of why they have been elected and what are they expected to accomplish why they represent the rest of us. Help them realize their opportunities to care for the needs of rich and poor, weak and strong, male and female employer and employee, and that we may work together in harmony and good faith.

Bless our church as we work together to feed the hungry, and serve other missions to help In anyway we can. Help us be a presence of hope in our community as we share the good news of Jesus Christ.

We pray for all those in our congregation who are ill and unable to be as active in the church as they once were. Bring the light of your heart to them so they know they are still loved.

We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus, who taught us to pray . . .

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: Refrain of

“More Love to You, O Christ” 456

**In all I say and do, more love, O Christ, to you,
More love to you, more love to you!**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

The call to generosity is a charge to love with our resources in material ways. When we give from our abundance, we express our gratitude to God our Provider, we assert our trust in God our Sustainer, and we affirm our communal commitments to God our Creator. Let us give from love in action and in energy, in spirit and in truth, in hope and in expectation that the kingdom comes when we choose to live it.

**OFFERTORY: “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”
Sebastian Temple**

***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**

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

Great God, receive these gifts of love with blessing for those who give and those who receive. Magnify our ministries, enlarge our circles of care, and amplify our love in the world. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

Come to the table of grace.

Here we find food that truly satisfies.

Come to the table of promise.

Here we find the hope to which we are called.

Come to the table of life.

Here we find strength for the journey.

Come to the table of abundant love.

Here we find care for our souls.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING:

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, source of mercy and creator of heaven and earth.

From the ancient dreams of Joseph and Daniel to the visions of John of Patmos, you have revealed the hope to which we are called.

When your people ignored your dreams and visions, and when they lost faith in the power of your grace, you came to us in the form of a servant, revealing the power of grace and hope.

Through the law and prophets, and through the pioneers of our faith, you have taught us to be your people.

In love and mercy, you speak truth and blessings, renewing your covenant with us in holy love. And so, with your people on earth, and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you and blessed is your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time, you sent your Son to

reveal your Presence in the midst of our brokenness, and to show us the path of grace, hope, and love.

In humility and love, Christ revealed your kingdom, and offered us a glorious inheritance in your name.

With hope in Christ's powerful love and endless grace, we are invited into your presence and rescued from our fear and despair.

We come to you with thanksgiving and hope, remembering how Jesus shared bread and wine with his companies and friends.

On the night before his death, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples, saying "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, and after giving thanks to you, shared the cup with his disciples, saying: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my life in the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts of love and grace, we offer ourselves in hopeful praise and thanksgiving, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION:

God of grace, hope, and love, send your Holy Spirit upon us. Touch these gifts with your Spirit, that they may be

signs of love and life for a world in need of our glorious inheritance, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

The grace of Christ, living in you.

The hope and love of Christ, flowing through you.

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

With songs of gladness in our hearts, we thank you for these gifts of grace and for the joy of our salvation. For gathering us into the safety of your love when we were outcast, we give you thanks and praise. For saving us from isolation and despair when we were lost and alone, we offer you our deepest gratitude. For loving us and being present with us during times of trial, we thank you. May the welcome and nourishment we have found at your table, strengthen our resolve to be instruments of your grace, and embodiments of your inclusive vision – a vision that can heal our world. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: “They’ll Know We are Christians”**

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.

And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

REFRAIN

And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand. We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand. And together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land, *REFRAIN*

We will work with each other, we will work side by side. We will work with each other, we will work side by side. And we’ll guard each one’s dignity and save each one’s pride, *REFRAIN*

**All praise to the Father, from when all things come.
And all praise to Christ Jesus, his only Son.
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one.
*REFRAIN***

***BENEDICTION:**

When love reigns, the world will change.

Be the love that the world needs

For the kingdom to become our beloved realm.

Go, in the assurance that the God of Love,

Who is Love, is with you.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

“Let There Be Peace On Earth”

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: “We Give Thee Thanks” Janet Rand

CONDOLENCES TO THE family and friends of Luz Captain who passed away on Friday, October 11 at the age of 96.

PRAYER LIST: Becky Ballard, Mary Lou Baum, Urban Baum, Ronald Bopp, Jackie Canterbury, Glen Case, Marilyn Paul, Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Leah Captain

Prayer for the Election

Holy God, One yet Three,
reach into the abundance of your companionship,
bring forth unity and healing in our land.

Cover this election with fairness and dignity.
Dismantle voter suppression and intimidation.
Grant simple, safe, equal access to the polls.
Make the way for all voices to be heard,
all votes to be counted.

Cover this election with grace and integrity.
Protect the process from corruption.
Strengthen all working for an honorable election.
Make the way for all voices to be valued,
all results to be trustworthy.

Cover this election with compassion and hope.
As we await results and move into a new era,
soften and soothe hard, violent hearts.
Rain down generosity of spirit
and a commitment to the common good,
so all may know blessing and opportunity
and belonging. Amen.

