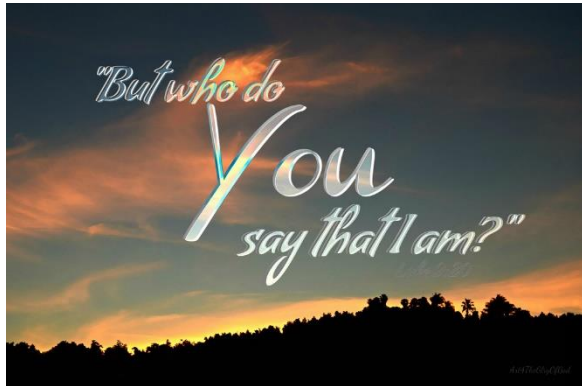


**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2024**  
**SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**MARK 8:27-38 | "IDENTITY"**



**ST. JOHN**  
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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*Organist – Sharon Banjavcic*  
*Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay*  
*Ushers –*

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

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

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:**

**THE BELL IS RUNG:**

**PRELUDE: "Trust and Obey" Stewart Landon**

**PENNIES FOR MISSION:**

**Deaconess Parish Nurse Ministries**

**\*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

**(INSPIRED BY PSALM 116)**

One: Call upon the Holy One, who is gracious and merciful.

**Many: We love the Holy One, who has heard our cry, responds to our prayers, and abides with us through our distress.**

One: Call upon the Holy One, who is gracious and merciful.

**Many: We praise the Righteous One, who protects, provides, and prepares their people.**

One: Call upon the Holy One, who is gracious and merciful.

**Many: We worship the Radiant One, who walks before us in the land of the living.**

**\*INVOCATION:**

Creator, we have come in response to your call to worship you. We have come to be in community with our neighbor. We have come onsite and online. We

have come with quiet contemplation and boisterous joy. We have come in grief and with hope. We come to gather in your name, to honor your presence, and to give you praise. Amen.

**\*OPENING HYMN: 300 “Jesus Shall Reign”**

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

**Loving God, we confess that you are a God of transformation and a solid rock. We strive to be like trees planted by the water, steadfast and unmovable at the same time that we embrace your continuing creative acts in the world and in our lives. We struggle at times to know when to remain firm and when to progress forward. Infuse us with your wisdom and discernment along with courage and grace to be fully who you have created us to be.**

**\*WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, God knows the journey that has shaped you, honors the efforts you have undertaken, and sustains you when you extend yourself forward. The Righteous One is merciful and grace-filled. Creator delights in you. Be bold and encouraged for the Sovereign One believes in you and goes with 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:**

**Isaiah 50:4-9a**

**God’s faithful servant**

<sup>4</sup>The Lord God gave me an educated tongue to know how to respond to the weary with a word that will awaken them in the morning.<sup>[a]</sup>

God awakens my ear in the morning to listen, as educated people do.

<sup>5</sup>The Lord God opened my ear; I didn’t rebel; I didn’t turn my back.

<sup>6</sup>Instead, I gave my body to attackers, and my cheeks to beard pluckers.

I didn’t hide my face from insults and spitting.

<sup>7</sup>The Lord God will help me; therefore, I haven’t been insulted.

Therefore, I set my face like flint, and knew I wouldn’t be ashamed.

<sup>8</sup>The one who will declare me innocent is near. Who will argue with me?

Let’s stand up together.

Who will bring judgment against me?

Let him approach me.

<sup>9</sup> Look! The Lord God will help me.  
Who will condemn me?

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 116 Page 699 - 670**

**SECOND TESTAMENT LESSON: James 3:1-12**  
**TAMING THE TONGUE**

<sup>3</sup> My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers, because we know that we teachers will be judged more strictly. <sup>2</sup> We all make mistakes often, but those who don't make mistakes with their words have reached full maturity. Like a bridled horse, they can control themselves entirely. <sup>3</sup> When we bridle horses and put bits in their mouths to lead them wherever we want, we can control their whole bodies.

<sup>4</sup> Consider ships: They are so large that strong winds are needed to drive them. But pilots direct their ships wherever they want with a little rudder. <sup>5</sup> In the same way, even though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts wildly.

Think about this: A small flame can set a whole forest on fire. <sup>6</sup> The tongue is a small flame of fire, a world of evil at work in us. It contaminates our entire lives. Because of it, the circle of life is set on fire. The tongue itself is set on fire by the flames of hell.

<sup>7</sup> People can tame and already have tamed every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish. <sup>8</sup> No one can tame the tongue, though. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we both bless the Lord and Father and curse human beings made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Blessing and cursing come from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, it just shouldn't be this way!

<sup>11</sup> Both fresh water and salt water don't come from the same spring, do they? <sup>12</sup> My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree produce olives? Can a grapevine produce figs? Of course not, and fresh water doesn't flow from a saltwater spring either.

**\*GOSPEL READING: Mark 27-38**

**JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH**

<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went into the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"

<sup>28</sup> They told him, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets."

<sup>29</sup> He asked them, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Christ." <sup>30</sup> Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: "The Human One must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and

be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead.”<sup>32</sup> He said this plainly. But Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him.<sup>33</sup> Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, then sternly corrected Peter: “Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

<sup>34</sup>After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup>All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. <sup>36</sup>Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? <sup>37</sup>What will people give in exchange for their lives? <sup>38</sup>Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One<sup>[b]</sup> will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**MESSAGE: “Now that we know who he is, he is leaving us?”**

Months ago, when we read about Jesus visiting his hometown, his neighbors and family wondered who he was. Who he had become? Every Sunday since, we have had the same question? Who is this man?

In today’s passage, Jesus asks the same question. Who do you say that I am? The disciples have been with him for awhile so their answer should be based on what they have seen, heard, and experienced.

This Gospel passage that I read this morning is actually a turning point in the whole Gospel of Mark, in that Jesus introduces his coming passion to his disciples and begins to move toward Jerusalem. This passage is the beginning of a much larger unit which ends in Chapter 10:45. It is bracketed by two stories of healing the blind; one in 8:22-26 and the other in chapter 10:46-52. The governing theme is Jesus’ predictions of his passion and the disciples’ total inability to understand or to accept what Jesus said.

Today’s reading consists of three parts; the confession of Peter, Jesus’ prediction of his passion, and the instructions to the crowd about discipleship. All three focus on who Jesus is.

If you took a poll on who people thought Jesus is, they would say Jesus is a forerunner of the messiah. Jesus’ announcement of the approaching kingdom and his words and deeds of power have heightened anticipation but have not persuaded the people that he is the fulfillment of that anticipation. They have, as we all have, an image of the coming messiah, but Jesus does not fit it. After all, it is easier to believe that a messiah WILL come than to believe one HAS come. Messiah as future keeps our images intact and

makes no demands; messiah as present calls for an altered image and demands an altered self. LET ME SAY THAT AGAIN. If the Messiah is present, we have to change how we “see” him, “hear” him, and “speak” to him. And then, after all that, IT’S OUR TURN TO CHANGE.

Of course, we have an advantage. We have always known who the messiah is, but have we always agreed or accepted who a MESSIAH is? Do we wish Jesus would do things differently? Do we wish this Messiah would answer our prayers better and faster? Would we want the Messiah to change at all?

Is it us who need to change? Amen

### **SPECIAL MUSIC: “Take Up Your Cross” Video**

**PASTORAL PRAYER:** Gracious God, we thank you for all that you provide and the blessings we receive daily from you. We know that, at times, we feel hopeless amid so much uncertainty in our world, but we trust you, O God, to bring us peace. And to give us comfort when we are overwhelmed with anxiety. Please help us be calm in the chaos around us and give us the strength to overcome.

Compassionate God, we lift prayers for the homeless, the hungry, the lonely, the rejected, those left behind, and all suffering injustice in our community and the world. We pray for all those on

our prayer list and those we hold in our hearts. Hear their cries for healing, wholeness, and acceptance, O loving God.

Loving God, we pray that our hearts will be open to the change that needs to happen here on earth so your Sovereignty will be a reality and all your creation will sing your praises. Please help us to see each other as gifts from you. Let us enthusiastically embrace your love to share the good news with those who need to hear and receive your amazing grace.

**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: Three-fold Amen**

**Amen, Amen, Amen**

### **INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:**

The Holy One creates, sustains, and renews with abundant generosity. Let us demonstrate our participation in the kingdom, our trust in God, and our stewardship of our resources through our giving to support our collective ministry.

**OFFERTORY: "Take the Name of Jesus"**

**Stewart Landon**

**\*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:**

**Generous God, may these gifts honor your name and  
your generous Spirit alive within us. We thank you  
for the opportunity and privilege of contributing to  
your kingdom and our world.**

**\*CLOSING HYMN: 457 "Jesus, I Live to You"**

**\*BENEDICTION:**

**May you reflect the goodness of God in the land of  
the living.**

**May you appreciate the beauty of God's creation.  
And may you know and be known in every encounter.  
Rest in the identity of the Holy One as you go in the  
peace of your identity. Amen.**

**BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

**"Let There Be Peace on Earth"**

**THE BELL IS RUNG:**

**POSTLUDE: "Who Is on the Lord's Side"**

**Robert J. Hughes**