

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2025
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
| ***"DOWN WITH THEM"***



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CHURCH OF CHRIST**
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(NCH) New Century Hymnal -
CCLI LICENSE #11164431
*Please stand if comfortably able.
Respond with words in bold print.
Ushers –

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: "Marching to Zion" Anna Laura Page

PENNIES FOR MISSION:

***CALL TO WORSHIP (INSPIRED BY PSALM 1)**

One: Happy are those who delight in the law of the Holy One. Meditate on God's word day and night.

Many: Our Sovereign God watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

One: Happy are those who delight in the law of the Holy One. Plant yourself like a tree and yield good fruit in due season.

Many: Our Sovereign God watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

One: Happy are those who delight in the law of the Holy One. Prosper in all that you do according to kingdom measures.

Many: Our Sovereign God watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

***INVOCATION:**

Righteous God, you create us for community, and you commune with us. May we seek your presence anew this day and in the time to come. Help us to recognize you in the sound and feel of our own

breath and in the movement or noise of those around us. Embolden us to faith that surpasses understanding and ministry that reflects radical trust in you and the path of abundance, compassion, and connection. Let our worship in song and prayer be a foreshadowing of our worship in action and witness. Transform us from despair to hope, complacency to courage, and indifference to love in your name. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 52 “O How I Love Jesus”**

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

Abiding God, you come near to us. We give thanks that you do not turn away from us when our lives reflect messiness, ungraciousness, and complacency. Take us deeper, O God, and help us to confront what needs to be known, addressed, and changed within us, our community, and our world. Forgive us and free us from guilt and shame so that we might embrace a life of accountability and transformation for the glory of God and for the hope of humanity. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Good creation of God, the Holy One has begun a good work in you and will see it through to completion. You have power to transform and grace

to enter the newness of life. God is near and comes down with us. Receive God’s mercy, forgiveness, and grace as the gift that has been given. It is available, yours, and enough.

***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: Jeremiah 17:5-10

⁵The Lord proclaims:

Cursed are those who trust in mere humans,
who depend on human strength
and turn their hearts from the Lord.

⁶They will be like a desert shrub
that doesn’t know when relief comes.

They will live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in a barren land where no one survives.

⁷Happy are those who trust in the Lord,
who rely on the Lord.

⁸They will be like trees planted by the streams,
whose roots reach down to the water.

They won’t fear drought when it comes;
their leaves will remain green.

They won’t be stressed in the time of drought
or fail to bear fruit.

⁹ The most cunning heart—
it's beyond help.

Who can figure it out?

¹⁰ I, the Lord, probe the heart
and discern hidden motives,
to give everyone what they deserve,
the consequences of their deeds.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 1 Page 621

EPISTLE LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

¹² So if the message that is preached says that Christ has been raised from the dead, then how can some of you say, "There's no resurrection of the dead"? ¹³ If there's no resurrection of the dead, then Christ hasn't been raised either. ¹⁴ If Christ hasn't been raised, then our preaching is useless and your faith is useless. ¹⁵ We are found to be false witnesses about God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, when he didn't raise him if it's the case that the dead aren't raised. ¹⁶ If the dead aren't raised, then Christ hasn't been raised either. ¹⁷ If Christ hasn't been raised, then your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins, ¹⁸ and what's more, those who have died in Christ are gone forever. ¹⁹ If we have a hope in Christ only in this life, then we deserve to be pitied more than anyone else.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead. He's the first crop of the harvest of those who have died.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 6:17-26 From the "Message"**

¹⁷⁻²¹ Coming down off the mountain with them, he stood on a plain surrounded by disciples, and was soon joined by a huge congregation from all over Judea and Jerusalem, even from the seaside towns of Tyre and Sidon. They had come both to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. Those disturbed by evil spirits were healed. Everyone was trying to touch him—so much energy surging from him, so many people healed! Then he spoke:

You're blessed when you've lost it all.

God's kingdom is there for the finding.

You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.

Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.

You're blessed when the tears flow freely.

Joy comes with the morning.

²²⁻²³ "Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—skip like a lamb, if you like!—for even though they don't like it, I do . . . and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this.

Give Away Your Life

²⁴ But it's trouble ahead if you think you have it made.

What you have is all you'll ever get.

²⁵ And it's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself.

Your *self* will not satisfy you for long.

And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games.

There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it.

²⁶ "There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests—look how many scoundrel preachers were approved by your ancestors! Your task is to be true, not popular.

*These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.
Thanks be to God. Amen.*

MESSAGE: Changing our minds.

Have you ever thought something for many years and then realized you were wrong? For example, when I grew up I thought all men were tall. My dad was 6'2" and my brother was 6'3". Plus my mother was 6'1". How disappointed I was when I found out many male "movie stars" aren't even 5'11"? I gave up and married a guy 5'7"

I had similar thoughts about our family physicians. My mother took me to one family physician until I moved away. He was a male, round, older, and was usually smoking a cigar. Somewhere along the line, my doctor's got younger, no longer smoked, and many were female. I seemed to have passed them up somehow.

The disciples experienced something similar. You could say that Jesus' ideas were upside-down or what the disciples had been taught were upside-down. Jesus chose 12 men who had been raised in Hebrew schools, taught by Rabbi's and scribes. That's all they knew, because that's all the Rabbi's knew - the Torah.

Jesus was forming a new kind of team. How is he going to change their minds? Lecturing them for hours about his "new" ideas wouldn't help Jesus. That they needed was three or four things to remember to do, and three or four things to remember not to do. Then, in the heat of the moment, these basic guidelines will come back to them, or so Jesus hoped, and keep them focused on how best to teach others about Jesus.

So, what was Jesus doing? What did the disciples already have? The disciples had long memories. They remembered a time when God called the twelve tribes of Israel – descended from the twelve sons of Jacob – and made them his special people, so

that through them he could fulfill his purposes for the whole world.

Now Jesus had come, as it were, into the world where all sorts of people are trying out ways of being God's people – some with new rules to obey, some with new schemes for violent revolution, some with support for Herod and his regime, some with proposals for withdrawing into the desert and praying in private, and no doubt others as well. From the people in had met, Jesus chooses twelve. Jesus was picking an Israel team. They were to be the nucleus, the center and starting – point, for what God was now going to do. They were the core of God's renewed Israel.

Jesus gave them clear orders as to how his vision of God's work would go forward. Four promises, and four warnings, presented in terms of Israel's great scriptural codes. In the book of Deuteronomy, there were long lists of "blessings" for those who obeyed the law, and "curses" for those who didn't.

These formed part of the charter; the covenant, the binding agreement between God and Israel. Now, with the renewed Israel formed around him, Jesus gives them his own version of the same thing. And a radical version it is. It's an upside-down code, or Perhaps, (Jesus might have said) a right-way-up code instead of the upside-down ones people had been following. (Not all men are 6 feet tall.) God is

doing something quite new; as Jesus had emphasized in the synagogue at Nazareth, in Chapter 4, he is fulfilling his promises at last, and this will mean good news for all the people who haven't had any good news for a long time.

The poor or hungry, those who weep, those who are hated: blessings on them! But when injustice is reigning, the world will have to be turned once more the right way up for God's justice and kingdom to come to birth.

So how will people react to the new message from Jesus? Who is Jesus calling? And to what sort of a task? We must each decide for ourselves. Amen.

CHANCEL CHOIR: "I Have Decided Medley" DavidCulross

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Here we are, merciful Holy One. We come to you with much on our minds, yet we know you can touch our hearts, telling us what is important, what needs our attention, teaching us how to help relieve the anguish of those who need our help. We think we can't help. You know better, wise One. Donate to the food pantry. Send donations to those who have lost their homes in the recent fires in California. Phone calls to those who have received devastating news about their health. There are many ways to help our

neighbors and our supposed enemies. We don't even have to leave our homes to pray for others. And we do. We pray the world will be more loving. We pray that tears will cease and the tears will stop if we give our attention to God's guidance.

Have mercy on us in our ignorance and our laziness. Listen as we pray together as one voice.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 769 "Hear our prayer"

Hear our prayer, O Lord. Hear our prayer, O Lord.
Incline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY: Blessed are we when we bring forth our gifts for the needs of the poor, the pursuit of justice, the nurturing of community, the honoring of difference, and the goal of the common good. Woe to us when we mistake abundance as scarcity and generosity as a handout. God has given enough gifts for all to be well. By sharing our blessings, we demonstrate faith, trust and love.

OFFERTORY: "We Would See Jesus" Edward Broughton

***DOXOLOGY:** 785 "We Give You but your Own"

We give you but your own,
whate'er the gift may be;
All that we have is yours alone,

we give it gratefully.

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**

Generous God, you have planted generosity in our hearts. Receive our gifts as part of your redemptive work to save the world from inequities, pain, and despair. May our resources be renewed and magnified so that all needs are met and your name be praised. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 436 "God of Grace and God of Glory"**

***BENEDICTION:**

As you go into the world, remember that
Embodied Love has come down to join you.
God's grace has come down to redeem you.
Spirit has come down to empower and equip you
To also come down with the world
In need of hope and encouragement
In want of witness and public proclamation
That God is good and still down with us..

BENEDICTION RESPONSE: "Let There Be Peace on Earth"

POSTLUDE: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" Roger C. Wilson