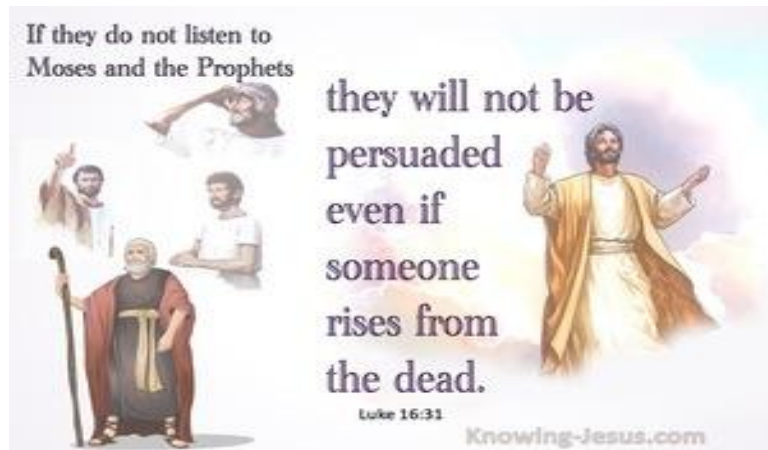


# SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



### ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Rev. Rosemary Captain

*Pianist / Organist – Lisa Cleveland and Lynda Marshall*

*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

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture texts  
are from the **Common English Bible (CEB)**

### SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS

**Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15** A real estate deal is consummated as a sign of hope for the future in a time when Jerusalem was under siege.

**1 Timothy 6:6-19** Paul urges us to set our hopes on God rather than the fleeting uncertainty of riches.

**Luke 16:19-31** Jesus tells another provocative parable about the eternal hazard of greed.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

#### THE BELL IS RUNG:

**PRELUDE: "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"**

by Carl G. Glaser, arr. by Jerry Aultman

#### PENNIES FOR MISSION:

Deaconess Parish Nurse Ministries

### \*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP (Inspired Psalm 146)

One: Praise God! Praise the Holy One, O my soul!

**Many: We will sing praises to God our whole lives long!**

One: Praise God in whom we may trust. Praise God in whom we may hope.

**Many: Happy are we whose hope is in the Maker of heaven and earth.**

One: The Holy One lifts the bowed down. The Righteous One loves justice.

**Many: The Holy One brings the way of the wicked to ruin. Praise God who reigns forever!**

### **\*INVOCATION**

God our Comforter and our Confronter, speak to our souls. Engage our spirits with truth and compassion. Stir our hearts with your vision of a world full of your love and hope. Inspire us through your word, meet us in the moment, and infuse us with joy and courage to pursue your way. Guide us on the journey even as you dwell in our worship so that we may honor you and be restored in you. Amen.

**\*OPENING HYMN: 305 “You Servants of God, Your Sovereign Proclaim”**

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

Compassionate God, we need to repent. We confess that too often we only care about our own suffering and discomfort and ignore the pain and troubles of our neighbor. We turn away or even contribute to the plight of others. We feast on systems that create deprivation and inequity. We enjoy the spoils of war that leave human siblings to subsistence in rubble and ruins. We accept distortions of the gospel that claim that your creation is insufficient to meet the needs of your beloved when your kingdom enables all to flourish. Meet us as we turn back to your way and your reign. Liberate us so that we may be instruments of restoration, repair, and renewal in your name. Amen.

### **\*WORDS OF GRACE:**

God’s mercy endures and renews. The world envisioned by the Holy One is available when we believe it, commit to it, and pursue it with all our being. Receive God’s grace to do a new thing, in word and in deed, so that the world may know the love of God, the hope of God, and the promise of God through what we say, how we live, what we do, and the fruit we produce.

### **\*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 32: 1-3a, 6-15**

**From “The Message”**

#### **Killing and Disease Are on Our Doorstep**

32 <sup>1-5</sup> The Message Jeremiah received from God in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah. It was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the army of the king of Babylon was holding Jerusalem under siege. Jeremiah was shut up in jail in the royal palace. Zedekiah, king of Judah, had locked him up, complaining, “How dare you preach, saying, ‘God says, I’m warning you: I will hand this city over to the king of Babylon and he will take it over. Zedekiah king of Judah

will be handed over to the Chaldeans right along with the city. He will be handed over to the king of Babylon and forced to face the music. He'll be hauled off to Babylon where he'll stay until I deal with him. God's Decree. Fight against the Babylonians all you want—it won't get you anywhere.'"

<sup>6-7</sup> Jeremiah said, "God's Message came to me like this: Prepare yourself! Hanamel, your uncle Shallum's son, is on his way to see you. He is going to say, 'Buy my field in Anathoth. You have the legal right to buy it.'

<sup>8</sup> "And sure enough, just as God had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me while I was in jail and said, 'Buy my field in Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin, for you have the legal right to keep it in the family. Buy it. Take it over.'

"That did it. I knew it was God's Message.

<sup>9-12</sup> "So I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel. I paid him seventeen silver shekels. I followed all the proper procedures: In the presence of witnesses I wrote out the bill of sale, sealed it, and weighed out the money on the scales. Then I took the deed of purchase—the sealed copy that contained the contract and its conditions and also the open copy—and gave them to Baruch son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah. All this took place in the presence of my cousin Hanamel and the witnesses who had signed the deed, as the Jews who were at the jail that day looked on.

<sup>13-15</sup> "Then, in front of all of them, I told Baruch, 'These are orders from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, the God of Israel: Take these documents—both the sealed and the open deeds—and put them for safekeeping in a pottery jar. For God-of-the-Angel-Armies, the God of Israel, says, "Life is going to return to normal. Homes and fields and vineyards are again going to be bought in this country.'"

### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16**

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### **EPISTLE LESSON: 1 Timothy 6:6-19**

<sup>6</sup> Actually, godliness is a great source of profit when it is combined with being happy with what you already have. <sup>7</sup> We didn't bring anything into the world and so we can't take anything out of it: <sup>8</sup> we'll be happy with food and clothing. <sup>9</sup> But people who are trying to get rich fall into temptation. They are trapped by many stupid and harmful passions that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some have wandered away from the faith and have impaled themselves with a lot of pain because they made money their goal.

<sup>11</sup> But as for you, man of God, run away from all these things. Instead, pursue righteousness, holy living, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Compete in the good fight of faith. Grab hold of eternal life—you were called to it, and you made

a good confession of it in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup> I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and Christ Jesus, who made the good confession when testifying before Pontius Pilate. <sup>14</sup> Obey this order without fault or failure until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup> The timing of this appearance is revealed by God alone, who is the blessed and only master, the King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup> He alone has immortality and lives in light that no one can come near. No human being has ever seen or is able to see him. Honor and eternal power belong to him. Amen.

### **Wealth of good works**

<sup>17</sup> Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup> Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. <sup>19</sup> When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly life.

### **\*GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 16:19-31**

<sup>19</sup> “There was a certain rich man who clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and who feasted luxuriously every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate lay a certain poor man named Lazarus

who was covered with sores. <sup>21</sup> Lazarus longed to eat the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. Instead, dogs would come and lick his sores.

<sup>22</sup> “The poor man died and was carried by angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> While being tormented in the place of the dead, he looked up and saw Abraham at a distance with Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup> He shouted, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I’m suffering in this flame.’ <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received good things, whereas Lazarus received terrible things. Now Lazarus is being comforted and you are in great pain. <sup>26</sup> Moreover, a great crevasse has been fixed between us and you. Those who wish to cross over from here to you cannot. Neither can anyone cross from there to us.’

<sup>27</sup> “The rich man said, ‘Then I beg you, Father, send Lazarus to my father’s house. <sup>28</sup> I have five brothers. He needs to warn them so that they don’t come to this place of agony.’ <sup>29</sup> Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets. They must listen to them.’ <sup>30</sup> The rich man said, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will change their hearts and lives.’ <sup>31</sup> Abraham said, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, then neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

### **MESSAGE: “Two Lessons from One Parable”**

We’ve all seen them. Maybe not so much around here, but we do see them at intersections with their signs. “Money for food!” In larger cities we see them in shop doorways, in alleys, perhaps asleep on park benches with newspaper for blankets. I went to a meeting in San Antonio, Texas a few years back. My hotel was a few blocks from the convention center. I had to step around many lying on the sidewalks. There was a McDonald’s on the corner and when the morning rush was over, they would open the back dining area and invite them in for free coffee and warmth.

We’ve all heard the talk from good citizens who don’t understand their situation. “It’s his own fault. He’s chosen it. There are agencies to help him. He should go and get a job. If we give him money he’ll only spend it on drink or drugs. Stay away! He might be violent.” Sometimes the police come and move them to another neighborhood.

So we all know Lazarus. He is our neighbor. Some of us have enough to put food on the table, live in nice homes, and are able to take baths frequently and launder our clothes. Compared to Lazarus we’re well off. He would be glad to change places with us, and we would be horrified to share his life, even for a day.

Jesus’ story is about Lazarus (and by the way; this is the only time we know the name of a character in any

of Jesus’ parables) and the unnamed rich man who is often called “Dives,” because that’s the Latin word for “rich”. This story is very like a well-known folk tale in the ancient world. Jesus was by no means the first to tell of how wealth and poverty might be reversed in the future life. In fact, stories like this were so well known that we can see how Jesus has changed the pattern that people would expect. In the usual story, when someone asks permission to send a message back to the people who are still alive on earth, the permission is granted. Here, it isn’t and the sharp ending of the story points beyond itself to all sorts of questions that Jesus’ hearers, and Luke’s readers, were urged to face.

This parable is not primarily a moral tale about riches and poverty – although in this chapter of Luke, it should be heard in that way as well. If that’s all it was, some might say that it was better to let the poor stay poor, since they will have a good time in the future life. That sort of argument has been used too often by the careless rich for us to want anything to do with it. No; there is something more going on here. The story, after all, doesn’t add anything new to the general folk belief about fortunes being reversed in a future life. If it’s a parable, that means once again that we should take it as picture-language about something that was going on in Jesus’ own work.

So Pastor, what are the two lessons we are to learn from this parable? I'm glad you asked. First of all, I'm sure there were Pharisees standing close to Jesus when he told this parable. They loved to hear about sin; anybody's sin (except their own, of course). What was the sin of Dives, the rich man in this story? Why was he sent to live in torment? He had not ordered Lazarus to be removed from his gate. He had made no objections to his receiving the bread that was flung away from his table. He did not kick him in the passing. He was not deliberately cruel to Lazarus. The sin of Dives was that he never noticed Lazarus, that he accepted him as part of the landscape and simply thought it was perfectly natural and inevitable that Lazarus should lie in pain and hunger while he wallowed in luxury. As someone said, "It was not what Dives did that got him into jail; it was what he did NOT do that got him into hell." Dives did not pay attention; he ignored Lazarus.

So Pastor, what is the second lesson? It seems hard that Dives request that his brothers should be warned was refused. Personally, I think that would be like cheating on a test. As if you had a piece a paper with all the correct answers on it that you could copy. Didn't you listen to the teacher? You should know all the answers if you paid attention. (Tongue-in-cheek. Are we paying attention?) Getting back to the brothers, the plain fact that if people possess the truth of God's word,

and if, wherever they look, there is sorrow to be comforted, need to be supplied, pain to be relieved, and it moves them to no feeling and to no action, nothing will change them.

In this parable Jesus is asking the hearers to do what Moses and the prophets would have said. As Luke makes clear throughout his kingdom-mission is the fulfillment of the whole story of Israel. Anyone who understands the law and the prophets must therefore see that Jesus is bringing them to completion. If they do not, then not even someone rising from the dead will bring them to their senses.

The last sentence of the parable, like a great crashing chord on an organ, contains several different notes. It speaks of the whole hope of Israel for restoration and renewal. It speaks of the poor and outcast being welcomed by Jesus. And it speaks, for Luke's readers from that day to this, most powerfully of Jesus himself. One day soon, the reader knows, the law and the prophets will all come true in a new way, as Jesus himself rises again, opening the door to God's new age in which all wrongs will be put right.

By golly, both of these lessons are the same. There are not two lessons but one! Dives ignored Lazarus. Are we ignoring Jesus and what he wants from us? Are we ignoring God and what God wants us to do and be? Are we paying attention? Amen.

**SPECIAL MUSIC: “Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus”**  
**Tune: Ebenezer; Thomas J. Williams, arr. Mark Hayes**

**PASTORAL PRAYER:**

Here we are God, sitting together in this very special place, your sanctuary, our sanctuary. We wouldn't be here if we didn't want to be touched by your presence in this special place. Sure, we know you are everywhere God, but there is something sacred about this time and place when we can be together, laugh and cry together, here your words revealed to us anew, sing song of praise together, and receive new hope for us and this world when we feel hopeless.

We come here to perhaps learn new ways to help our neighbors, hear who needs our prayers, and truly pay attention to God, God's son, and the Holy Spirit who is also with us constantly to give us the energy and the motivation to move forward to action.

We come here to pray for others who are in pain and in need. We pray for those affected by violence in the world and on our front porches. We are here to pay attention to what is happening in our world and find ways we can help, starting with buckets and buckets of prayers to drown out the words of those who are trying to break all of us down. We will not be conquered by evil. If God is with us and we abide in God, nothing and no one can separate us from God's love. . .

**OUR LORD'S PRAYER:**

**PRAYER RESPONSE: 769**

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

**INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:**

May our hearts be open to the generous life. The Sovereign God invites us to participate in building the kingdom through our financial resources. Let us give in gratitude and joy knowing that sharing our abundance blesses our neighbor, community, and world.

**OFFERTORY: “What a Friend” Charles C. Converse, arr.  
by Joel Raney**

**\*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:**

**Holy One, receive these gifts as expressions of trust  
and love of You and care and love of your beloved.**

**Magnify them for your glory and bless those who give  
in faithfulness and hope. Amen.**

**\*CLOSING HYMN: 284 “Blessed Quietness”**

**\*BENEDICTION:**

As you go,  
Spread comfort and hope  
Notice people  
Recognize their condition  
Know their worth  
And be comforted  
That the Maker of heaven and earth  
Notices you  
Recognizes your condition  
And knows your worth.  
Go in hope and care.

**BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

**“Let There be Peace on Earth”**

**THE BELL IS RUNG:**

**POSTLUDE: “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”**

**Ludwig Van Beethoven, arr. Mark Hayes**