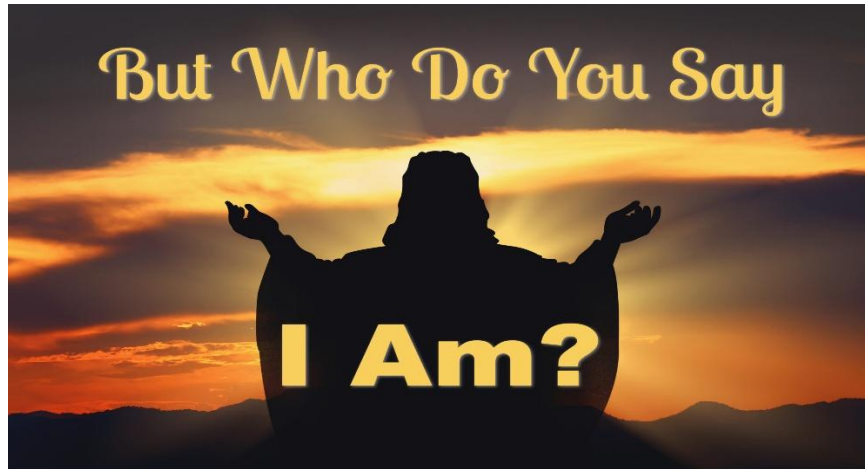


AUGUST 23, 2026
13TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



St. John United Church of Christ

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Website: www.stjohnfairview.org

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Organist/Pianist – Sharon Banjavcic

Liturgy – Rev. Lavon Bayler

Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

Bible translation – CEB Common English Bible

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: “Amazing Grace” Lani Smith

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Our Churches Wider Mission

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

ONE: Our help is from God, who made heaven and earth. Come to worship the One who answers our prayers.

MANY: If God were not on our side, we could not live.
If God were not for us, we would be swept away.

ONE: God has gifted each one of us in unique ways. In our variety, we complement one another.

MANY: We rejoice in God’s love and faithfulness.

Blessed be our God, whose word is true.

ONE: In thankfulness, we bring our joyous songs. We are here to pay attention to God’s instructions

MANY: We are here, seeking to discern God’s will. We are open to God’s transforming Spirit.

***INVOCATION:** God beyond our knowing, we believe that you care for humble people who seek to follow your Word more than for those who are pretentious and proud in places of power. You have protected your people when they were surrounded by trouble. You have provided a way of escape in the midst of oppression. Your love never fails. Come, Holy One, to

transform us. Work within and among us to renew our minds and build community. Nurse us into the health you intend for all your children. You are our help and our hope. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 307**

“Glorious Things of You Are Spoken”

***CALL TO CONFESSION:** We who look with horror at the oppression of the pharaohs of Egypt need to view our own privileged positions. We, like the ancient rulers, enjoy the fruits of others’ hard labor, the benefits of their slave-like toil. We eat food picked by migrant laborers and wear clothing sewn in sweatshops. Our insensitivity separates us from God.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

O God, we did not realize that we are among the rich oppressors of this world. We think we are poor when we cannot have everything we want. Keep us from misusing the power we have. We confess our fear of those who are unlike us. We set up barriers against them when we are afraid. Keep us from acting in ways that alienate and divide. When we are tempted to conform to the world’s standards, set before us the higher model of sacrifice and service that is given to us in Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:**

God give us grace to think with sober judgment and to act with confident faith. By that grace we have unique gifts to use within the body of Christ. God forgives and heals and empowers us with new insights and expanded capacity to serve. In humble obedience, we learn the joy of following Jesus and living for the highest good for all. Thanks be to God!

***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

**OLD TESTAMENT: Exodus 1:8-2:10 From the Message
“A New King . . . Who Didn’t Know Joseph”**

⁸⁻¹⁰ A new king came to power in Egypt who didn’t know Joseph. He spoke to his people with alarm, “There are way too many of these Israelites for us to handle. We’ve got to do something: Let’s devise a plan to contain them, lest if there’s a war they should join our enemies, or just walk off and leave us.”

¹¹⁻¹⁴ So they organized them into work-gangs and put them to hard labor under gang-foremen. They built the

storage cities Pithom and Rameses for Pharaoh. But the harder the Egyptians worked them the more children the Israelites had—children everywhere! The Egyptians got so they couldn't stand the Israelites and treated them worse than ever, crushing them with slave labor. They made them miserable with hard labor—making bricks and mortar and back-breaking work in the fields. They piled on the work, crushing them under the cruel workload.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ The king of Egypt had a talk with the two Hebrew midwives; one was named Shiphrah and the other Puah. He said, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the sex of the baby. If it's a boy, kill him; if it's a girl, let her live."

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ But the midwives had far too much respect for God and didn't do what the king of Egypt ordered; they let the boy babies live. The king of Egypt called in the midwives. "Why didn't you obey my orders? You've let those babies live!"

¹⁹ The midwives answered Pharaoh, "The Hebrew women aren't like the Egyptian women; they're vigorous. Before the midwife can get there, they've already had the baby."

²⁰⁻²¹ God was pleased with the midwives. The people continued to increase in number—a very strong people. And because the midwives honored God, God gave them families of their own.

²² So Pharaoh issued a general order to all his people: "Every boy that is born, drown him in the Nile. But let the girls live."

Moses

² ¹⁻³ A man from the family of Levi married a Levite woman. The woman became pregnant and had a son. She saw there was something special about him and hid him. She hid him for three months. When she couldn't hide him any longer she got a little basket-boat made of papyrus, waterproofed it with tar and pitch, and placed the child in it. Then she set it afloat in the reeds at the edge of the Nile.

⁴⁻⁶ The baby's older sister found herself a vantage point a little way off and watched to see what would happen to him. Pharaoh's daughter came down to the Nile to bathe; her maidens strolled on the bank. She saw the basket-boat floating in the reeds and sent her maid to get it. She opened it and saw the child—a baby crying! Her heart went out to him. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrew babies."

⁷ Then his sister was before her: "Do you want me to go and get a nursing mother from the Hebrews so she can nurse the baby for you?"

⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said, "Yes. Go." The girl went and called the child's mother.

⁹ Pharaoh's daughter told her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me. I'll pay you." The woman took the child and nursed him.

¹⁰ After the child was weaned, she presented him to Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him as her son. She named him Moses (Pulled-Out), saying, "I pulled him out of the water."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 124 Page 236

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 12:1-8 The Words of Paul

Living sacrifice and transformed lives

12 So, brothers and sisters, because of God's mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate priestly service. ² Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.

Transformed relationships

³ Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. ⁴ We have many parts in one body, but the parts don't all have the same function. ⁵ In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually

we belong to each other. ⁶ We have different gifts that are consistent with God's grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, you should prophesy in proportion to your faith. ⁷ If your gift is service, devote yourself to serving. If your gift is teaching, devote yourself to teaching. ⁸ If your gift is encouragement, devote yourself to encouraging. The one giving should do it with no strings attached. The leader should lead with passion. The one showing mercy should be cheerful.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 16:13-20**

Peter's declaration about Jesus

¹³ Now when Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Human One is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

¹⁵ He said, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Then Jesus replied, "Happy are you, Simon son of Jonah, because no human has shown this to you. Rather my Father who is in heaven has shown you. ¹⁸ I tell you that you are Peter. And I'll build my church on this rock. The gates of the underworld won't be able to stand

against it. ¹⁹ I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Anything you fasten on earth will be fastened in heaven. Anything you loosen on earth will be loosened in heaven." ²⁰ Then he ordered the disciples not to tell anybody that he was the Christ.

MESSAGE: Peter Get's an "A"

Here we have the story of another withdrawal which Jesus made. The end was coming very near, and Jesus needed all of the time alone with his disciples that he could get. He had so much to say to them and so much to teach them, although there were many things which they could not bear and could not understand. So, Jesus took the disciples 25 miles north-east of the Sea of Galilee. The population was mainly non-Jewish, and there Jesus would have peace to teach the Twelve.

At this time Jesus had one pressing and demanding problem that would not go away. His time was short; his days on earth were numbered. The problem was – was there anyone who understood him? Was there anyone who had recognized him for who and what he was? Were there any who, when he is departed from the world, would carry on his work, and labor for his kingdom? Obviously, that was a crucial problem, for it involved the very survival of the Christian faith. (It wasn't called Christian then. It was called "the way".) If there were none who had grasped the truth, or even glimpsed it,

then all his work was undone; if there were just a few who realized the truth, his work was safe. So Jesus was determined to put all to the test and ask his followers who they believed him to be.

So, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus was determined to demand a verdict from his disciples. He had to know before he set out for Jerusalem and the cross if anyone had even dimly grasped who and what he was. He did not ask the question directly; he led up to it. He began by asking what people were saying about him, and who they thought he was.

Some said that he was Elijah. In doing so, they were saying two things about Jesus. They were saying that he was as great as the greatest of the prophets, for Elijah had always been looked on as the top and the prince of the prophetic line. They were also saying that Jesus was the forerunner of the Messiah.

As Malachi, a prophet from 450 BCE, had it, the promise of God was; "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." To this day, the Jews expect the return of Elijah before the coming of the Messiah, and to this day they leave a chair vacant for Elijah when they celebrate the Passover; for when Elijah comes, the Messiah will not be far away. So the people looked on Jesus as the herald of the Messiah and the forerunner of the direct intervention of God.

Some said that Jesus was Jeremiah. Jeremiah had a curious place in the expectations of the people of Israel. It was believed that, before the people went into exile, Jeremiah had taken the ark and the altar of incense out of the Temple, and hidden them away in a lonely cave on Mount Nebo; and that, before the coming of the Messiah, he would return and produce them, and the glory of God would come to the people again. In the book of 2 Esdras the promise of God is: "I will send you help, my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah."

Isn't it curious what the people of those times thought this homeless carpenter was and what he was doing. It's sort of like what people would say today if you asked them what God looks like.

When Jesus had heard what the disciples repeated from the people back in Galilee, he asked the all-important question? "And you – who do you say I am?" I'm sure there was a silent pause from the disciples as they looked down at their feet, too afraid to express what they thought.

The silent pause probably made Jesus a little worried. This is where we started our conversation. Doesn't anybody really know who Jesus is? Is there no one who can carry on Jesus Mission?

And then Peter made his great discovery and his great confession. At that point Jesus knew that his work was

safe because there was at least someone who understood.

It's interesting that this story is in all three synoptic Gospels but each has its own version of the saying of Peter. Matthew has, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." In Mark, it's a little briefer, "you are the Messiah." Luke is clearest of all, "the Messiah of God."

The most important lesson we can take from this passage is realizing that our knowledge about who Jesus is cannot be second hand. Each of us must have a personal discovery to answer Jesus' question. "You – what do you think of me?"

Christianity never consists in *knowing about* Jesus; it always consists in *knowing Jesus*. Jesus Christ demands a personal verdict. He did not ask only Peter, he asks every one of us: "You – what do you think of me?"
Amen

**SPECIAL MUSIC: "The Heart of Worship" –
St. John Choir**

PASTORAL PRAYER:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 775

**And God will raise you up on eagle's wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of God's hand.**

OFFERTORY INVITATION: We are invited to give with generosity, to minister in caring ways, to lead with diligence, to teach with enthusiasm. We cannot be all things to all people. But we can share the many gifts God pours out on us and do our best to live up to God's trust in us.

OFFERTORY: "In Times Like These"

Mrs. Ruth Caye Jones

***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.**

***UNISON OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

Receive our offering, gracious God, as an expression of our thankfulness. In your church, we are privileged to cultivate the dimensions of our lives that give meaning and purpose to all we do. Here we become aware that the greatest gifts we receive are not material, and we learn how best to use the particular gifts you give us. At the same time, you show us how our material advantages can help others. May many be blessed through our sharing of these offerings and our sharing of ourselves. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 377 "Forward Through the Ages"**

***RESPONSIVE COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

Serve the world as people transformed by God. Let others know God's mercy and forgiveness.

We seek to live as Jesus taught. We seek to embody trust in God and love of all.

Daily God renews our energy and confirms our gifts. In Christ we are drawn away from conformity to the world.

Our agenda is to discern and do God's will. We aim to use well the gifts God has given.

Remember that God is on our side. God calls us into community with one another.

In Christ, there are no enemies. We recognize all people as God's children.

Amen. Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE: 571**

**O God of Love, O God of Peace
Make wars throughout the world to cease.
The wrath of human wrong restrain;
Give peace, O God, give peace again.**

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: "Thanks Be to God" Ernest H. Sheppard

PRAYER LIST: Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Amber Forrester, Wayne Huss, our Beloved Country.