

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2026
NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



St. John United Church of Christ

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Rev. Rosemary Captain

Organist – Sharon Banjavcic

Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

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

NEVER FORGET Paul's Words. "I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers³⁹ or height or depth, or any other thing that is created." Romans 8:38-39

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS
THE BELL IS RUNG

PRELUDE: "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship"

Brian Doerksen/Carol Tornquist

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Hoyleton Ministries

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Give thanks to the Holy One. Make God's deeds known among the peoples.

Many: We call upon the name of the Holy One!

One: Give thanks to the Holy One. Tell of all God's wonderful works!

Many: We sing praises and remember the wonderful works, miracles, and judgements!

One: Give thanks to the Holy One. Glory in God's holy name!

Many: We seek the Holy One, and our hearts rejoice!
Praise the Holy One!

***INVOCATION:**

Gracious God, you have made yourself known among us. When we seek you, we find you. You surround us with love and righteousness. Your presence strengthens and upholds us. While we gather together, let us be mindful that your wisdom speaks, your power fuels, and your heart fills us. Grant us discernment. Let us be faithful. May you be glorified. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: “All God’s People” led by Nancy**

Chorus: Leader “All God’s People”

Congregation “All God’s People”

L: All God’s people

C: All God’s people

L: Welcome home

C: Welcome home

L: gather ‘round

BOTH: the Holy is here!

Nancy and Lew will sing the verses and lead you when its time for the chorus.

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

Glorious God, may your face shine upon us. Teach us your ways so that we may live in peace, justice, and

righteousness. Keep our way steady and directed toward you. Remove the hold of oppression and evil from among your people. Transform our hearts and minds so that we might reflect your goodness and love in the world. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Servants of God, the Holy One radiates grace and mercy. By the power of Love and Spirit, receive the opportunity to redeem and repair every mistake, every passive participation, every deliberate action that has caused harm. Receive God’s forgiveness in order to be released from shame and release to make things right. Nothing can separate us from God’s love.

***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: Genesis 29:15-28

From “The Message”

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Laban said, “You’re family! My flesh and blood!”

When Jacob had been with him for a month, Laban said, “Just because you’re my nephew, you shouldn’t work for me for nothing. Tell me what you want to be paid. What’s a fair wage?”

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Now Laban had two daughters; Leah was the older and Rachel the younger. Leah had nice eyes, but Rachel was stunningly beautiful. And it was Rachel that Jacob loved.

So Jacob answered, “I will work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.”

¹⁹ “It is far better,” said Laban, “that I give her to you than marry her to some outsider. Yes. Stay here with me.”

²⁰ So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel. But it only seemed like a few days, he loved her so much.

²¹⁻²⁴ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife; I’ve completed what we agreed I’d do. I’m ready to consummate my marriage.” Laban invited everyone around and threw a big feast. At evening, though, he got his daughter Leah and brought her to the marriage bed, and Jacob slept with her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid.)

²⁵ Morning came: There was Leah in the marriage bed! Jacob confronted Laban, “What have you done to me? Didn’t I work all this time for the hand of Rachel? Why did you cheat me?”

²⁶⁻²⁷ “We don’t do it that way in our country,” said Laban. “We don’t marry off the younger daughter before the

older. Enjoy your week of honeymoon, and then we’ll give you the other one also. But it will cost you another seven years of work.”

²⁸⁻³⁰ Jacob agreed. When he’d completed the honeymoon week, Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. (Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.) Jacob then slept with **her. And he loved** Rachel more than Leah. He worked for Laban another seven years.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 105:1-11, 45b Page 691

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 8:26-39

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don’t know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans. ²⁷ The one who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because he pleads for the saints, consistent with God’s will. ²⁸ We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ We know this because God knew them in advance, and he decided in advance that they would be conformed to the image of his Son. That way his Son would be the first of many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ Those who God decided in advance would be conformed to his Son, he also called. Those whom he called, he also made righteous. Those whom he made righteous, he also glorified.

³¹ So what are we going to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He didn't spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. Won't he also freely give us all things with him?

³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect people? It is God who acquits them. ³⁴ Who is going to convict them? It is Christ Jesus who died, even more, who was raised, and who also is at God's right side. It is Christ Jesus who also pleads our case for us.

³⁵ Who will separate us from Christ's love? Will we be separated by trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

We are being put to death all day long for your sake.

We are treated like sheep for slaughter.

³⁷ But in all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us. ³⁸ I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers ³⁹ or height or depth, or any other thing that is created.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52**

Parable of the mustard seed

³¹ He told another parable to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. ³² It's the smallest of all seeds. But

when it's grown, it's the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches."

Parable of the yeast

³³ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough."

Parable of the treasure

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that somebody hid in a field, which someone else found and covered up. Full of joy, the finder sold everything and bought that field.

Parable of the merchant

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one very precious pearl, he went and sold all that he owned and bought it.

Parable of the net

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that people threw into the lake and gathered all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, they pulled it to the shore, where they sat down and put the good fish together into containers. But the bad fish they threw away. ⁴⁹ That's the way it will be at the end of the present age. The angels will go out and separate the evil people from the righteous people, ⁵⁰ and will throw the evil ones into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.

Treasures new and old

⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. They said to him, “Yes.”

⁵² Then he said to them, “Therefore, every legal expert who has been trained as a disciple for the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings old and new things out of their treasure chest.”

MESSAGE:

Congratulations, students! You have all passed this semester’s honors class taught by Professor Matthew on “The Parables of the Kingdom”. Woe to any student who stands up and asks Jesus to repeat them again. I like the way Matthew writes verse 51. “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. They said to him, Yes.” I respond, “AMEN.”

I apologize for being sarcastic. I must remind myself that all these parables were NOT told to the disciples at one time. These teachings were spread out over weeks and months. I’m sure it started when just one disciples asked Jesus, “what is the kingdom of God.”

And, I agree it is important for all of us to know about the Kingdom of God or we wouldn’t be here. However,⁶ the way the parables are presented in the Gospel of Matthew makes it seem like Jesus said them all in one sitting and the pillow I’m sitting on has lost all its feathers.

The parables in this chapter are a challenge to us at two levels; understanding and action. Understanding without action is sterile; action without understanding is exhausting and useless.

When you take your driver’s license test first you answer questions from your book. Then you take a driver’s test. Can you do what you learned from the book and when you drive do you know what all the street signs mean? Understanding and action.

We’ve been listening to Jesus tell us what the kingdom of God is like, but are we ready to take it out for a spin? Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: Preview of Anniversary Pictures

PASTORAL PRAYER:

OUR FATHER’S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE:

**Remember me, Remember me,
O Jesus, remember me.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

We are privileged to participate in the construction of the kingdom of God. Through our gifts, we follow the model of God’s generosity, we express our hope for a better future, and we tangibly love our neighbor. Let us give

with joy and expectation that our gifts are met with
God's magnifying power.

***OFFERTORY: "Abiding Faith" Louis E. Stairs**

***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 PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING**
Generous God, may these gifts be sufficient to meet the
needs before. May we be good stewards of your
resources. And, may we be moved to live the generous
life more deeply and completely in every aspect of our
lives. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 312 "We Love Your Realm, O God"**

***BENEDICTION (Inspired by Matthew 13)**

As you go, carry the kingdom of God with you
Like mustard seeds ready to be planted
Along your journey
Like the greatest treasure
That may be shared without limit
Like a net of love

Cast widely and deeply
Go, in peace and hope for the glory of God

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: "Exaltation" Robert J. Hughes

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

Condolences to the friends and family of John Ninnis.