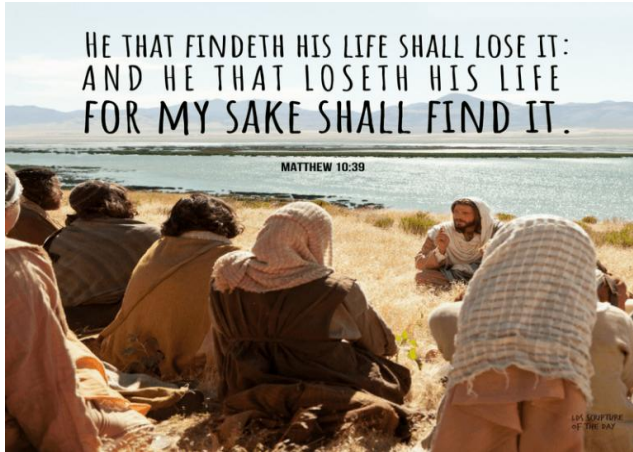


SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2026
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST



St. John United Church of Christ

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Rev. Rosemary Captain

Pianist - Nancy Eisenhauser

Liturgy – Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

Ushers -

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS
From “Preaching Through the Christian Year”
Fred Craddock

Genesis 21:8-21 relates the story of the rejection of Hagar and Ishmael and their eventual rescue by God. Following on last week’s account of God’s fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and Sarah through the birth of Isaac, today’s text provides an important statement about the extension of God’s gracious care beyond a single hereditary line.

Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17 the psalmist prays for rescue and deliverance, echoes the sentiments of those who, like Hagar, reach out to God for help when mistreated and rejected by their adversaries, and do so confident that God’s favor will be extended to them.

Romans 6:1b-11 the first part of Paul’s response to the question whether his theology of salvation by grace through faith leads to moral doctrine, emphasizes the believer’s union with Christ and the moral implications of this union.

Matthew 10:24-31 Jesus instructs the disciples about how they should relate to their aster, reassures them by distinguishing between their seeming adversaries and their true Adversary, clarifies the nature of true and false confession, and honestly confronts them with the critical choices disciples have to make.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS

THE BELL IS RUNG

PRELUDE “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” - Eithun

PENNIES FOR MISSION Penitentiary Chaplains

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP (INSPIRED BY PSALM 86)**

One: The Holy One is great and does marvelous things. Delight in God!

Many: The Holy One gladdens the soul. We lift them up!

One: In the day of trouble, we call on Comforter and Protector, Counselor and Provider, Companion and Peace.

Many: The Holy One soothes the soul. We call upon their name!

One: The Gracious and Eternal God gives ear to our prayers and listens to our cries.

Many: The Holy One hears the soul. We turn to our God in hope and faith!

***INVOCATION:**

Merciful and Compassionate God, we come into your presence. Be near to us as we draw closer to you. Be near to us even when we have doubts, have given up hope, and have been overwhelmed by our fears. Be

near to us as we sing, pray, give, and receive. We praise you for your goodness and worship you for who you are.

***OPENING HYMN: 204 “Take Up Your Cross”**

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

Listening God, we acknowledge that you know us. You are familiar with our attitudes, behavior, and character. You ground us in the fertile soil of your love. Yet, we confess that at times, we feel rooted in sand. We observe our life circumstances, and hope may collapse under despair, fear may overcome courage, and uncertainty drives out faith. Help us, O God, when we cry out and when we don’t. Speak to us so that your message drowns out any other voice, including our own, that believes less for us than your promises offer. Do a new thing in us, for us, and through us. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, the Holy One has observed, received, and acknowledged your need and your hope. In Christ, new life has been revealed, opened, and modeled for you. By Spirit, the Holy One leads us into renewing and transformative life. This is God’s will for each and

all of us. The love and strength of God will sustain us through every trial and propel us through our journey of hope, healing, and wholeness.

***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 21:8-21

Hagar and Ishmael evicted

⁸The boy grew and stopped nursing. On the day he stopped nursing, Abraham prepared a huge banquet. ⁹Sarah saw Hagar's son laughing, the one Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham. ¹⁰So she said to Abraham, "Send this servant away with her son! This servant's son won't share the inheritance with my son Isaac."

¹¹This upset Abraham terribly because the boy was his son. ¹²God said to Abraham, "Don't be upset about the boy and your servant. Do everything Sarah tells you to do because your descendants will be traced through Isaac. ¹³But I will make of your servant's son a great nation too, because he is also your descendant." ¹⁴Abraham got up early in the

morning, took some bread and a flask of water, and gave it to Hagar. He put the boy in her shoulder sling and sent her away.

She left and wandered through the desert near Beer-sheba. ¹⁵Finally the water in the flask ran out, and she put the boy down under one of the desert shrubs. ¹⁶She walked away from him about as far as a bow shot and sat down, telling herself, I can't bear to see the boy die. She sat at a distance, cried out in grief, and wept.

¹⁷God heard the boy's cries, and God's messenger called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "Hagar! What's wrong? Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy's cries over there. ¹⁸Get up, pick up the boy, and take him by the hand because I will make of him a great nation." ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. She went over, filled the water flask, and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰God remained with the boy; he grew up, lived in the desert, and became an expert archer. ²¹He lived in the Paran desert, and his mother found him an Egyptian wife.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17

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EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 6:1b-11

Our new life in Christ

6 So what are we going to say? Should we continue sinning so grace will multiply? ² Absolutely not! All of us died to sin. How can we still live in it? ³ Or don't you know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too can walk in newness of life. ⁵ If we were united together in a death like his, we will also be united together in a resurrection like his. ⁶ This is what we know: the person that we used to be was crucified with him in order to get rid of the corpse that had been controlled by sin. That way we wouldn't be slaves to sin anymore, ⁷ because a person who has died has been freed from sin's power. ⁸ But if we died with Christ, we have faith that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and he will never die again. Death no longer has power over him. ¹⁰ He died to sin once and for all with his death, but he lives for God with his life. ¹¹ In the same way, you also should consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 10:24-31**

²⁴ "Disciples aren't greater than their teacher, and slaves aren't greater than their master. ²⁵ It's enough

for disciples to be like their teacher and slaves like their master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, it's certain that they will call the members of his household by even worse names.

Whom to fear

²⁶ "Therefore, don't be afraid of those people because nothing is hidden that won't be revealed, and nothing secret that won't be brought out into the open. ²⁷ What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops. ²⁸ Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but can't kill the soul. Instead, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. ²⁹ Aren't two sparrows sold for a small coin? But not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father knowing about it already. ³⁰ Even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹ Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

MESSAGE: WHAT AND/OR WHOM SHOULD WE FEAR?

Today we have another lesson from Jesus to the disciples. I think next Sunday will be the last, but of course, we should never stop learning about and from Jesus. Nobody knows everything about our relationship with God.

For example, I have a question for you. Just shout out your answer. Which command is repeated most often in the Bible? You might imagine it's something stern: Behave yourself! Straighten up! Say your prayers! Worship God more whole-heartedly! Give more money away!

I'll give you a hint. It's the command we find in this week's verses 26, 28 and 31: It's Don't be afraid.

You can see easily enough why Jesus needed to tell his disciples not to be afraid, at this point in his instructions to them. After all, he has warned them that the authorities will be after them: that they will suffer physical and emotional violence; and now, that people will start calling them the sort of names they have already begun to call Jesus. Plenty to be afraid of there! And yet Jesus says, Don't be afraid.

Why does Jesus keep saying, don't be afraid? Maybe we imagine Jesus would say, "because God will look after you? Well, he does say that, eventually. But the first reason he gives (in verses 26-27) is that a time will come when everything will be uncovered. Everything that is presently secret will be made known. *Let me repeat that sentence.* Everything that is presently secret will be made known. What do you think about that. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Let me reread those two verses, 26-27. ²⁶ "Therefore, don't be afraid of those people

because nothing is hidden that won't be revealed, and nothing secret that won't be brought out into the open. ²⁷ What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops." Why should that mean they don't need to be afraid? Lots of people would regard the imminent disclosure of their most private thoughts and words as a further reason to be afraid, not as a reason to throw fear to the winds. Jesus seems to be assuming that what will come to light on that day is the disciples' loyalty and faith: they will be seen to have followed Israel's true Messiah, the world's true Lord. Their patience and perseverance will emerge into the light. What may have looked like obstinacy or even arrogance, will at last be seen as what it is, a resolute determination to follow the Lord of life wherever he leads. In other words, truth will be out, justice will prevail, and those who have lived with integrity and innocence, despite what the world says about them, will be vindicated. (repeat) That, rather than a quick God-will-look-after-you message, is what Jesus is ultimately offering.

But if they are to learn not to be afraid, they must also learn that there is one who deserves fear, even though this warning in verse 28 is then balanced again by a further "don't be afraid" in verse 31 Those verses are, ²⁸ Don't be afraid of those who kill the

body but can't kill the soul. Instead, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell." And verse 31 " ³¹ Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows." Are we confused yet? Why would Jesus tell his followers not to be afraid, then to be afraid, then not to be afraid again, all in the space of a few sentences?

Jesus believed that Israel was faced in his day by enemies at two quite different levels. There were the obvious ones: Rome, Herod, and the military under them. They were the ones who had the power to kill the body. But there were other, darker enemies, who had the power to kill the soul as well; enemies who were battling for that soul even now, during Jesus' ministry, and who were using the more obvious enemies as a cover.

Actually, it's even worse than that. The demonic powers that are greedy for the soul of God's people are using their very desire for justice and vengeance as the bait on the hook. The people of light are never more at risk than when they are lured into fighting the darkness with more darkness. That is the road straight to the smoldering rubbish pit to Gehenna, and Jesus wants his followers to be well aware of it. This is what you should be afraid of.

But at the same time, to balance that fear – and indeed to outweigh it altogether – we have one of

Jesus' most striking promises about the detailed love and care of God, not only for every one of his creatures, but for every hair on their heads. God is the one we do not have to fear. God is the one we can trust with our lives, our souls, our bodies, everything.

The message is plain. You are worth more than a great many sparrows; so rest assured that God knows and cares about the details of your life, even as you face the temptations and dangers which so easily surround you. Followers of Jesus are bound to expect attacks at all levels. But they should also learn that the one they are serving is stronger than the strongest opponent they will ever meet.

**SPECIAL MUSIC: "Every Step of the Way" Video
Christopher Grundy**

PASTORAL PRAYER:

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 773

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

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

The Holy One invites us into our generous life. Let us bring our resources together in order to support the

ministry of this and the wider church and meet the needs of our community and world. Our giving testifies to the goodness, graciousness, and abundance of God. Let us recognize and respond to the cries of our neighbors and siblings with our resources offered in love.

OFFERTORY: “Firm Foundation” arr, Tornquist

***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**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Holy One, thank you for the privilege of giving. Bless these gifts and those who give. Enable us to trust and participate in your abundance. Extend wisdom and discernment as we allocate these offerings. Expand our reach and impact for your kingdom and glory. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 503 “O Savior, Let Me Walk with You”**

***BENEDICTION:**

As you go,
Speak up for the marginalized
Give voice to injustice
Express cares and concerns of your own household
Make a joyful, hopeful, and grateful noise
And remember that the Still Speaking God is also Still Listening.

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:

PRAYER LIST: Connor Brink, Aidan Randall, Jane Bopp, Eleanor, Claire, Leah Captain, Bennie Pointer, Ginny Ganschietz, Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Sue Ganschietz, our beloved country.

CONGREGATIONAL BI-ANNUAL MEETING