SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
JOSHUA 24:1-3A, 14-25 *"WE WILL SERVE"*

St. John United Church of Christ

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Organist – Sharon Banjavcic
Liturgy – Rev. Lavon Bayler
Communion Liturgy – B.J. Beu and Mary Scifres
Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:
THE BELL IS RUNG:
PRELUDE: "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"
John M. Rasley
PENNIES FOR MISSION:
Open and Affirming Coalition

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**
(inspired by Psalm 78)
One: Set your hope in God, who is worthy of our trust.
Many: We remember the glorious deeds of the Holy One.
One: Set your hope in God, who orders our days and redeems our lives.
Many: We rejoice in the wonders the Holy One has done.
One: Set your hope in God, who leads us.
Many: We recommit to the ways of the Holy One.
Our hope is in God!

***INVOCATION:**
Holy One, we come before you with praise and thanksgiving. We invite you to inhabit our praise as we honor your precious name. Bind us together and refresh us as a community with justice and righteousness overflowing like a stream. Open our minds and hearts to be receptive to your still speaking voice. Make yourself known among us. You are our God, and we are your people. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 473 "Blessed Assurance"**

***PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**
Wise and just God, we do not want to come before you with empty words and meaningless acts. We know that your love has the power to transform us with compassion. We declare that your truth can

liberate us and renew us as liberators in the world. In the midst of a world too often guided by the pursuit of power, privilege, and prestige, soften our hearts. Help us reject the othering of our neighbors and your beloved. Help us reflect your goodness and good news through our lives, in word and deed. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**
Beloved, when we turn toward the Holy One, we find the Holy One has turned toward us. The God of compassion and grace will meet you in your hopes for a new life, will bring strength and power in your struggle, and will release you from actions and attitudes of the past. Receive God's forgiveness and invitation to embrace a new way going forward.

***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: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25
What God has done

24 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at
Shechem. He summoned the elders of Israel, its
leaders, judges, and officers. They presented
themselves before God. [2] Then Joshua said to the
entire people, "This is what the Lord, the God of
Israel, says: Long ago your ancestors lived on the
other side of the Euphrates. They served other gods.
Among them was Terah the father of Abraham and
Nahor. [3] I took Abraham your ancestor from the other
side of the Euphrates. I led him around through the
whole land of Canaan. I added to his descendants and
gave him Isaac.

Challenge to be faithful
14 "So now, revere the Lord. Serve him honestly and
faithfully. Put aside the gods that your ancestors
served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt and serve
the Lord. **15** But if it seems wrong in your opinion to
serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will
serve. Choose the gods whom your ancestors served
beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites in
whose land you live. But my family and I will serve
the Lord."
16 Then the people answered, "God forbid that we
ever leave the Lord to serve other gods! **17** The Lord is
our God. He is the one who brought us and our
ancestors up from the land of Egypt, from the house

of bondage. He has done these mighty signs in our sight. He has protected us the whole way we've gone and in all the nations through which we've passed.
18 The Lord has driven out all the nations before us, including the Amorites who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God."
19 Then Joshua said to the people, "You can't serve the Lord, because he is a holy God. He is a jealous God. He won't forgive your rebellion and your sins.
20 If you leave the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn around and do you harm and finish you off, in spite of having done you good in the past."
21 Then the people said to Joshua, "No! The Lord is the one we will serve."
22 So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord." They said, "We are witnesses!"
23 "So now put aside the foreign gods that are among you. Focus your hearts on the Lord, the God of Israel." **24** The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and will obey him."

Joshua makes a covenant
25 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people and established just rule for them at Shechem.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 78:1-7, Page 669

EPISTLE LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Believers who have died
13 Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about people who have died so that you won't mourn like others who don't have any hope. 14 Since we believe that Jesus died and rose, so we also believe that God will bring with him those who have died in Jesus.
15 What we are saying is a message from the Lord: we who are alive and still around at the Lord's coming definitely won't go ahead of those who have died.
16 This is because the Lord himself will come down from heaven with the signal of a shout by the head angel and a blast on God's trumpet. First, those who are dead in Christ will rise. 17 Then, we who are living and still around will be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet with the Lord in the air. That way we will always be with the Lord. 18 So encourage each other with these words.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 25:1-13**
Parable of the ten young bridesmaids
25 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten young bridesmaids who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and the other five were foolish. 3 The

foolish ones took their lamps but didn't bring oil for them. [4] But the wise ones took their lamps and also brought containers of oil.
[5] "When the groom was late in coming, they all became drowsy and went to sleep. [6] But at midnight there was a cry, 'Look, the groom! Come out to meet him.'
[7] "Then all those bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. [8] But the foolish bridesmaids said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps have gone out.' [9] "But the wise bridesmaids replied, 'No, because if we share with you, there won't be enough for our lamps and yours. We have a better idea. You go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' [10] But while they were gone to buy oil, the groom came. Those who were ready went with him into the wedding. Then the door was shut. [11] "Later the other bridesmaids came and said, 'Lord, lord, open the door for us.'[12] "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' [13] "Therefore, keep alert, because you don't know the day or the hour.

MESSAGE: "Ah, weddings! What could go wrong?"
I'm sure many of you have stories about weddings that didn't go as planned; brides or bridesmaids fainting; a tuxedo too small for the groom; the flowers being delivered to the wrong church, or the best man losing the ring. You name it, it can happen at a wedding, and that's only in the modern West traditions.

In the Middle East, to this day, there are some places where the customs at a wedding are quite similar to the one described here. In the West, people don't normally get married in the middle of the night! But in that culture torchlight processions, late in the evening, are certainly known, and it seems as though the proceedings might have several stages, with the bridegroom likely to be delayed at an earlier venue (such as a few drinks at a friend's house or at a local bar) before he arrives for the banquet itself, to be greeted at last by the bridesmaids.

So much for the local color of this story, which otherwise might be confusing for people used to other customs. What else is going on here? What does this parable add to the repeated warnings Jesus has already given about the need to be ready?

Even more obviously than other of Jesus' parables, this story is rooted in the Jewish tradition of contrasting wisdom and folly – being sensible or being silly. In this story, Lady Wisdom and Mistress Folly have each become five young girls, and the story invites its hearers to decide which they'd rather be. Obviously, wisdom in this case means being

ready with the oil for the lamp, and folly means not thinking about it until it's too late.

This story began with Jesus describing, once again, the kingdom of heaven or God. If we are not prepared, we may miss the whole thing and be locked out. At the last sentence, Jesus says, "So keep awake! You don't know the day or the hour." None of us know when the kingdom will arrive. How can we be prepared? The answer to that, my friends, is sitting in these pews. You know how to prepare for guests; run the vacuum, set the table, cook a delicious meal. But what about your heart, the part of your body Jesus is interested in?

You don't need to me to tell you what you can do to be ready. Its between you and your God. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: "Seek Ye First" Video

PASTORAL PRAYER:
OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 743 "Be Still and Know"
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:
God has given us good and generous gifts out of abundant love. People do not face need because creation is insufficient. When we share the resources of creation, we proclaim our faith and trust that God provides more than enough for all of us to flourish. Let us give in faith and hope.

OFFERTORY: "The Summons" John Bell

***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 DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**
Loving God, accept our offerings as a testament to our love, faith, and hope. Magnify them for your glory and to meet the needs of the community. Expand our reach and glorify your name through our giving, O God. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 493 "O Jesus, I Have Promised"**

***BENEDICTION:**
As you go from this time and gathering,
Rest in the covenant, Choose love every day,
Sustain hope in action, Serve the Holy One with love

and honor,
And be a witness for the goodness of God in the land
of the living. 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: "Strength and Stay" Rob Roy Perry

PRAYER LIST: Cindy Jablonski**,** Jim Warning**,** Kim Holmes, Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Wayne Huss, Liv. C., Nate Hbich, our Beloved Country.