

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2026
NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
MATTHEW 21:33-46
“A PEOPLE THAT PRODUCES ITS FRUIT”

St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL
Telephone 618-397-6323
e-mail– stjohnuccfairview@gmail.com
Website: www.stjohnfairview.org
Rev. Rosemary Captain
Organist – Sharon Banjavcic
Liturgy - Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay
Communion Liturgy – Beu and Scifres
Ushers -

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS

THE BELL IS RUNG

PRELUDE: “The Solid Rock” Edward Mote, William B.

Bradbury, Melody Bober

PENNIES FOR MISSION

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

(inspired by Psalm 19)

One: The heavens tell the glory of God! The way of the Holy One is perfect.

Many: God’s commandments are right and clear.

One: The creation tells the glory of God! The work of the Holy One is perfect.

Many: God’s expectations are pure and righteous.

One: The people tell the glory of God! The law of the Holy One is perfect.

Many: Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, Holy One, our rock and redeemer.

***INVOCATION:**

God of Truth, we acknowledge that we meet you here in this time and place. We gather as a community formed by you, called by your name, and charged for your purpose. We ask you to guide our hearts, minds and souls to know your ways. We place our hope in your abiding love, abundant creation, and awesome works. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 335 “Come Gather in this Special Place”**

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

Righteous God, you have given us blueprints to follow for living a faithful life. Your commandments are clear and your example considerable. Yet, we often drift away from loving you, loving our neighbor, and loving ourselves. Remind us that the path to flourishing, full life is love. Lead us back to that everlasting path so that we might be fruitful and give glory to your name. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

God's grace meets us at our point of need with compassion, direction, and strength. Receive this grace in order to transform us into the people we can be—shining the radiant reflection of the image we bear and producing our own fruit.

***GLORIA:** Written by Rev. Dr. Christopher Grundy
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)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

FIRST TESTAMENT: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

The Ten Commandments

20 Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ You must have no other gods before me.

⁴ Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth.

⁷ Do not use the Lord your God's name as if it were of no significance; the Lord won't forgive anyone who uses his name that way.

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. ⁹ Six days you may work and do all your tasks,

¹² Honor your father and your mother so that your life will be long on the fertile land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ Do not kill.

¹⁴ Do not commit adultery.

¹⁵ Do not steal.

¹⁶ Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

¹⁷ Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's house. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox, donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

¹⁸ When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the horn, and the mountain smoking, the people shook with fear and stood at a

distance. ¹⁹ They said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we’ll listen. But don’t let God speak to us, or we’ll die.”

²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid, because God has come only to test you and to make sure you are always in awe of God so that you don’t sin.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 19 Page 630

EPISTLE READING: Acts 4:5-12

⁵ The next day the leaders, elders, and legal experts gathered in Jerusalem, ⁶ along with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and others from the high priest’s family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and asked, “By what power or in what name did you do this?”

⁸ Then Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, answered, “Leaders of the people and elders, ⁹ are we being examined today because something good was done for a sick person, a good deed that healed him? ¹⁰ If so, then you and all the people of Israel need to know that this man stands healthy before you because of the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone you builders rejected; he has become the cornerstone! ¹² Salvation can be found in no one else. Throughout the whole world, no other

name has been given among humans through which we must be saved.”

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 21:33-46**

Parable of the tenant farmers

³³ “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. Then he rented it to tenant farmers and took a trip. ³⁴ When it was time for harvest, he sent his servants to the tenant farmers to collect his fruit. ³⁵ But the tenant farmers grabbed his servants. They beat some of them, and some of them they killed. Some of them they stoned to death. ³⁶ “Again he sent other servants, more than the first group. They treated them in the same way. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. ³⁸ “But when the tenant farmers saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come on, let’s kill him and we’ll have his inheritance.’ ³⁹ They grabbed him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ “When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenant farmers?” ⁴¹ They said, “He will totally destroy those wicked farmers and rent the vineyard to other tenant farmers who will give him the fruit when it’s ready.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read in the scriptures, *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this, and it’s amazing in our eyes?*” ⁴³ Therefore, I tell you that God’s kingdom will be taken away from you and will be given to a people who produce its fruit.

⁴⁴ Whoever falls on this stone will be crushed. And the stone will crush the person it falls on.” ⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard the parable, they knew Jesus was talking about them.

⁴⁶ They were trying to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, who thought he was a prophet.

MESSAGE:

Today’s Gospel reading falls within the controversy section of Matthew, 21:23-22:14. As we have seen last week, the controversy is between Jesus and the chief priests and elders of the people. Jesus is quizzed about his authority and his credentials, and he responds with a question concerning their opinion of John’s authority. Following this encounter, Jesus takes the offensive, pointing out that the real issue is not his authority but the response of his interrogators to his preaching and that of John, which called for repentance and the bearing of fruit appropriate to the kingdom of God. Jesus’ indictment of his critics is presented in three

parables. Our lection for today includes the second of the three.

Last week and this week we hear vineyard stories and concern obedience, and so have natural kinship. Verse 43 makes it clear that the subject is not a vineyard but the kingdom of God. We the readers have known this from the outset, however, because the parable opens with direct use of the image of Israel as God’s vineyard from the passage from Isaiah 5:1-7.

“Song of the vineyard

5 Let me sing for my loved one a love song for his vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ² He dug it, cleared away its stones, planted it with excellent vines, built a tower inside it, and dug out a wine vat in it. He expected it to grow good grapes— but it grew rotten grapes.

³ So now, you who live in Jerusalem, you people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard: ⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard that I haven’t done for it? When I expected it to grow good grapes, why did it grow rotten grapes?

⁵ Now let me tell you what I’m doing to my vineyard. I’m removing its hedge, so it will be destroyed. I’m breaking down its walls, so it will be trampled.

⁶ I’ll turn it into a ruin; it won’t be pruned or hoed, and thorns and thistles will grow up. I will

command the clouds not to rain on it.

⁷The vineyard of the Lord of heavenly forces is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are the plantings in which God delighted.

God expected justice, but there was bloodshed; righteousness, but there was a cry of distress!”

In other words. The story of a vineyard is not really a story of a vineyard; the issue is God and the people of God. This is made more clear by the insertion of a quotation from Psalm 118:22-23 (verse 41)

“⁴²Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read in the scriptures, *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this, and it’s amazing in our eyes?*”

This passage concerns not a vineyard but a building, and the rejected stone that God made the head of the corner. Why this insertion, which evokes a different image? Because, the change of image notwithstanding, the quotation corroborates the parable’s climax: the tenants cast out and kill the owner’s son (verse 39). By this time, of course, it is clear to the reader that the story is about the rejection and killing of Jesus, preceded by the beating and killing of the prophets whom God had sent, calling for fruitfulness among God’s people. The stone which the builders rejected has become the top cornerstone; it wouldn’t fit anywhere else in

the building, but it will go in the place of greatest honor. And the stone will crush anything that collides with it. He is the stone, the Messiah, God’s anointed; he has come to bring into being the kingdom of God through which the kingdoms of the world will shiver, shake and fall to the ground.

And why is this an interpretation of the parable? Because the stone and the Son are the same. The Son the farmers rejected is vindicated when the owner comes and destroys them, and gives the vineyard to someone else. The stone the builders rejected is vindicated then it goes in place at the top of the corner.

This whole story is therefore Jesus’ way of explaining what was going on then and there. It is Jesus’ perspective on the very events he was involved in – rejected by those he had come to, but destined to be vindicated by God. The vineyard owner is of course God; the vineyard is Israel; the farmers are Israel’s officials, and the slaves are the earlier prophets, ending with John the Baptist. The Son can only be Jesus himself.

This is a story full of depth, sorrow and power. It tells how Jesus has now come to Jerusalem to confront the tenant farmers with God’s demand for repentance, for Israel to be at last what it was called to be, the light of God’s world. And it is a story of

how Israel, through its official representatives, is going to refuse the demand, and will end up by killing him.

There are many ways those who write commentaries and interpretations of this passage explain what it says and means. Some concentrate on what was going on in MATTHEW'S CHURCH when he wrote this 60 years or so after Jesus left our earth. Some concentrated on what was going on at the time of Jesus. This story is also in the gospels of Mark and Luke, so they spin the passage a little differently.

Verse 44 ⁴⁴ Whoever falls on this stone will be crushed. And the stone will crush the person it falls on." Has the quality of a proverb and as such carries its truth to all people without distinction. In other words, followers of Jesus need to heed the truth it expressed as much as the original audience did. We need to heed the truth.

And what is its truth? Jesus is the stone of God, the cornerstone of God's work. His role is decisive; he is, in a sense, the crisis of the world. He is not to be dealt with casually as just another religious figure. To encounter him is to face a moment of truth; life's Yes and No are at stake. Who more than the churches needs to ponder this proverb?

SPECIAL MUSIC: "When We Gather at the Table"

Trio: Anne Brown, Nancy Eisenhauer, and Stacie Pickens

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Our merciful Creator, we come to give you thanks and praise for all you do for all of us. You care for us like a mother with her newborn at her chest, as she is in awe of the child God has given her.

We can never say thanks enough for giving each of us life of little oppression. Yes, we have illness and injuries, moments of doubt, worries about our children or wondering how we will pay all our bills. Yet you remain with us in all the worries of our lives.

But we must remember that many people in this world are suffering much worse than us and we must try to help them in any way we can. Those people may be thousands of miles away so we must search for those in our own neighborhoods that we can help. Maybe a casserole to a neighbor who just came home from the hospital or donations to the food pantry or offer to drive someone to a dr's appointment or to church. Or offer prayers with those who are lonely or grieving. We are grateful for the opportunities we have to be a harvest of love.

We pray all these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray. . .

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: Threefold Amen

Amen, Amen, A.....Men.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

Like a bountiful fall harvest, let us bring forth gifts from the fruit of our lives. May we give in thanksgiving and hope for the ministry of this faith community and God's church.

OFFERTORY: "One Bread, One Body" John B. Foley

***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**

**Generous God, may these gifts be pleasing to you.
We pray to be faithful and fruitful in the use of
these offerings so that we will serve you, O God,
and our neighbors in love. Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION: (1 John 4:7-21, John 15: 1-17)

As we come to the table of Christ's love,

We abide in holy mystery.

For Christ is the vine,

And we are the branches.

Come to the vine, and bear the fruit of the Spirit.

We will bear the fruit of holy love.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

In ancient days, you created us in your image, and placed us in your vineyard to bear much fruit. When the branches of our lives failed to abide in the vine of your love, you pruned our shortcomings, that we might once again bear good fruit.

When we failed to tend the vineyard of our lives, and the fruit of our spirit grew wild, you sent prophets, teachers and gardeners, to show us how to tend our fields. When we turned your servants away, forsaking the blessings of your harvest, you sent us

your Son, Christ Jesus, to be our true vine, in the hopes that we might once again abide in your love. And so, with your people on earth, and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you and blessed is the true vine of your constant love, Jesus Christ. As we abide in the vine of Christ's mercy and grace, we abide in the holy mystery of your indwelling Spirit. As the branches of our spirits abide in the true vine, we are rescued from death and decay. With Christ as our true vine, we abide in your love and proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

With joy and gratitude, we break this bread of life, remembering the many times that Jesus' love was shared in the breaking of the bread.

In remembrance, we will take and eat this bread.

With awe and wonder, we fill this cup, remember the many times that Jesus poured out his love as an everlasting spring of mercy and grace. In remembrance, we will drink from this cup and partake of the love that overflows in our lives.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Pour out your Holy spirit on us, that we may abide in Christ, our true vine, and bear much fruit.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine, that they may fill us with your abiding love.

Strengthen us in the power of your Holy Spirit, that we may be one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at your heavenly banquet.

Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever more. Amen.

GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

The vine of Christ, abiding in you.

The vine of abundant life, nurturing the branches of your love.

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 596 “Rock of Ages”**

BENEDICTION:

May the God of the harvest bring forth seeds in you.
May every good seed you plant produce fruit.
May our fruit nourish and nurture the world.
Go, in peace and fruitfulness knowing that the Holy One goes with you.

***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: “God Is Our Salvation” Chester Nordman

PRAYER LIST: Cindy Jablonski, Carol Bulva, Jim Warning, Kim Holmes, Nancy W., Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Wayne Huss, our Beloved Country.