

June 13, 2021 – 10:00 am
3rd Sunday after
Pentecost



ST. JOHN UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST

10207 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL
Office 397-6323
Office Hours: Monday,
Thursday 9-3
Pastor Rosemary Captain

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP: *Based on
Psalm 20*

It is good to give thanks to God!

Come to make music to our Creator.

**God knows our troubles and remembers
our need. Our petitions are answered
and our hearts' desires fulfilled.**

Declare God's steadfast love and
faithfulness. Seek God's help in the
sanctuary.

**We know that God will help the anointed
ones. Our pride is in God alone.**

Listen for the voice of God, speaking to us
again. How great is our God, our rock and
defender!

**God will respond when we call. We will
bear fruit for God as long as life endures.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

We turn to you, God of all worlds,
knowing we can depend on you when
earthly rulers stumble and fall,
when other relationships are strained and
broken, when we are faced with difficult
challenges. It is good to declare your
faithfulness when we have been
unfaithful. It is good to give thanks, for
when we do, we are reminded of the
multitude of blessings we so often take for

granted. Lead us in this time of worship.
Amen.

GLORIA PATRI:

Glory to the Creator, the Christ,
the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One; As it was in
the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 4:26-34

²⁶ Then Jesus said, “This is what God’s kingdom is like. It’s as though someone scatters seed on the ground, ²⁷ then sleeps and wakes night and day. The seed sprouts and grows, but the farmer doesn’t know how. ²⁸ The earth produces crops all by itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full head of grain. ²⁹ Whenever the crop is ready, the farmer goes out to cut the grain because it’s harvesttime.”

³⁰ He continued, “What’s a good image for God’s kingdom? What parable can I use to explain it? ³¹ Consider a mustard seed. When scattered on the ground, it’s the smallest of all the seeds on the earth; ³² but when it’s planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all vegetable plants. It produces such large branches

that the birds in the sky are able to nest in its shade.”

³³ With many such parables he continued to give them the word, as much as they were able to hear. ³⁴ He spoke to them only in parables, then explained everything to his disciples when he was alone with them.

These are the Ancient Words given to us
so that we may hear them anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

SERMON:

“Planting the Seeds of the Kingdom”

Throughout his ministry, Jesus talked about the kingdom of God. His listeners asked Jesus what that was. One way he answered their question was by reciting parables. We just heard two. But what do they mean?

This is the only parable which the author Mark relates to us. The kingdom of God really means *the reign of God*; it means the day when God’s will will be done as perfectly on earth as it is in heaven. That is the goal of God for the whole universe.

This first parable tells us of *human helplessness*. The farmer does not make the seed grow nor does he even understand how it grows. It has the secret of life and of growth within itself. No one has ever possessed the secret of life; no one has ever created anything in the full sense of the term.

We can discover things; we can rearrange them; we can develop them; but create them we cannot. We do not create the kingdom of God; the kingdom is God's. It is true that we can frustrate it and hinder it, or we can make a situation in the world where it is given the opportunity to come more fully and more speedily. But we cannot create the kingdom of God itself.

This parable tells us something about the *kingdom*. It is a notable fact that Jesus so often uses illustrations from the growth of nature to describe the coming of the kingdom of God. Nature's growth is often *imperceptible*. It is so with the kingdom. There is not the slightest doubt that the kingdom is on the way if we compare, not today with yesterday, but this century with the century which went before.

Nature's growth is *constant*. Night and day, while we are sleeping, growth goes

one. There is nothing spasmodic about God. The great trouble about human effort and human goodness is that they are spasmodic. But the work of God goes on quietly; unceasingly God unfolds God's plan.

Nature's growth is *inevitable*. There is nothing so powerful as growth. A tree can split a concrete pavement with the power of its growth. It is so with the kingdom. In spite of human rebellion and disobedience, God's work goes on; and nothing in the end can stop the purposes of God.

Nature's growth tells us that there is a *consummation*. There is a day when the harvest comes when two things happen – which are opposite sides of the same thing. The good fruit is gathered in, and the weeds are destroyed. Harvest and judgment go hand in hand.

And when that time comes, we are summons to patience, hope, and preparedness. We are creatures of the moment and inevitably we think in terms of the moment. God has all eternity in which to work. We need to learn patience. We are also living today in an atmosphere of despair, so we need to listen to God's words of hope. If there

comes the consummation' we must be ready for it. It's too late to prepare for it when it is upon us.

The second parable Jesus gives us today shows us an image of small to great. We should never be daunted by small beginnings. Either in our personal journey of faith or in the growth of our church, we must remember that small steps can lead to giant leaps.

Do these two parables help you imagine what the kingdom of God is? If it's still a little blurry, Jesus will give us more pictures in the future. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God of hope, patience, and persistence, we are not very good at any of these characteristics. Teach us, guide us, never give up on us. We'll learn.

This morning we come with hearts full of love for you, and concerns about loved ones. We pray for those on our prayer list, and all the other people struggling with pain, loneliness, and despair. Make your presence known to them.

We pray for our church and the churches around the world. Many find "church" irrelevant in these times. Help us show others how knowing you, dear

God, can make these times more joyful and hopeful. Be with us as we pray the prayer your son taught us.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed it be your name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as, we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

OFFERING OF GIFTS, TITHES AND SELVES:

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:

You have been exceedingly generous to us, O God. We return a portion of what we have to you in grateful thanksgiving. Bless our offerings that they will nurture the seeds of hope and healing in this community and beyond. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May God's love be with you as you sow seeds of justice and peace along the paths you will travel so all may know the gospel's promise. Amen

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Nelson Libell, Joe Knapp, Jim Garrett, Ronald Bopp (husband of Pastor's friend), Agnes Doctolero, Jennie Wilson.