

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2026**  
**23<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**St. John United Church of Christ**

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Rev. Rosemary Captain

*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: “For All the Saints” Lani Smith**

**PENNIES FOR MISSION:**

**\*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

ONE; Come, all who are thirsty, those souls are fainting:

Come, all whose troubles seem overwhelming.

**MANY: The Source and Creator of all things welcomes us. God hears our cries and is ready to help us.**

ONE: Come, all who are pure, upright, and blameless. Come, all who dwell day by day in God’s realm.

**MANY: The Messiah has more to teach us. Jesus turns us from seeking honor to humble service.**

ONE: Draw near and hear the word of our God.

Open your lives to the Spirit who fills all things.

**MANY: We sense the presence of truth seeking to enter us. We feel the love of God eager to embrace us.**

**\*INVOCATION:**

O God, our true home, we come together to unite our stories with those of our spiritual ancestors. Some of us have come from desert places, desperate for nourishment. Some of us come from places of abundant harvests and yet are not satisfied. You are among us all, a living God, present in ways we have not yet realized. We come to learn, to let what we learn mold and change us, to find courage and energy to live by your direction. We bring our joyous worship, confident of your welcome to us. Amen.

**\*OPENING HYMN: 49 Ask Me What Great Thing I Know”**

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION:** Let there be no pretense among us as we address our thoughts to God. We may fool one another, but God knows us as we really are. All that we try to hide from ourselves comes to light before the One who searches our hearts.

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

Gracious God, help us to be honest with ourselves, with one another, and with you. We have searched for life amid temporary attractions. We have sought excitement in places that turned out to be desert wastelands. We have burdened others with our mistakes. We have sought honors and made comparisons to look better than those around us. We have devoted little time to thanking and praising you, the Source of all things. Open us now, O God, to the Word we need from you. Amen.  
Moments of silence.

**\*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:**

God gathers us from the east and the west, north and the south, drawing us into a caring community where burdens are shared, hope is renewed, and people are freed and equipped to use their God-given gifts. Springs of water emerge from parched lands as we alert one another to blessings we had overlooked.

Let the redeemed of the Creator say so. Let us give thanks to God, whose steadfast love endures forever.

**Thanks be to God. Amen**

**\*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 3:7-17**

<sup>7</sup> The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you great in the opinion of all Israel. Then they will know that I will be with you in the same way that I was with Moses. <sup>8</sup> You are to command the priests who carry the covenant chest, 'As soon as you come to the bank of the Jordan, stand still in the Jordan.'"

<sup>9</sup> Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come close. Listen to the words of the Lord your God." <sup>10</sup> Then Joshua said, "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and will completely remove the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites before you. <sup>11</sup> Look! The covenant chest of the ruler of the entire earth is going to cross over in front of you in the Jordan.

<sup>12</sup> Now pick twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one

per tribe. <sup>13</sup> The soles of the priests' feet, who are carrying the chest of the Lord, ruler of the whole earth, will come to rest in the water of the Jordan. At that moment, the water of the Jordan will be cut off. The water flowing downstream will stand still in a single heap."

### **Marching across the Jordan**

<sup>14</sup> The people marched out from their tents to cross over the Jordan. The priests carrying the covenant chest were in front of the people. <sup>15</sup> When the priests who were carrying the chest came to the Jordan, their feet touched the edge of the water. The Jordan had overflowed its banks completely, the way it does during the entire harvest season. <sup>16</sup> But at that moment the water of the Jordan coming downstream stood still. It rose up as a single heap very far off, just below Adam, which is the city next to Zarethan. The water going down to the desert sea (that is, the Dead Sea) was cut off completely. The people crossed opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> So the priests carrying the Lord's covenant chest stood firmly on dry land in the middle of the Jordan. Meanwhile, all Israel crossed over on dry land, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37**

**EPISTLE: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13**

<sup>9</sup> You remember, brothers and sisters, our efforts and hard work. We preached God's good news to you, while we worked night and day so we wouldn't be a burden on any of you. <sup>10</sup> You and God are witnesses of how holy, just, and blameless we were toward you believers. <sup>11</sup> Likewise, you know how we treated each of you like a father treats his own children. <sup>12</sup> We appealed to you, encouraged you, and pleaded with you to live lives worthy of the God who is calling you into his own kingdom and glory.

### **How the Thessalonians received God's message**

<sup>13</sup> We also thank God constantly for this: when you accepted God's word that you heard from us, you welcomed it for what it truly is. Instead of accepting it as a human message, you accepted it as God's message, and it continues to work in you who are believers.

### **\*GOSPEL: Matthew 23:1-12**

#### **Ways of the legal experts and the Pharisees**

23 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and his disciples, <sup>2</sup> "The legal experts and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, you must take care to do everything they say. But don't do what they do. <sup>4</sup> For they tie together heavy packs that are impossible to carry. They put them on the shoulders of others, but are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. <sup>5</sup> Everything

they do, they do to be noticed by others. They make extra-wide prayer bands for their arms and long tassels for their clothes. <sup>6</sup> They love to sit in places of honor at banquets and in the synagogues. <sup>7</sup> They love to be greeted with honor in the markets and to be addressed as 'Rabbi.'

<sup>8</sup> "But you shouldn't be called *Rabbi*, because you have one teacher, and all of you are brothers and sisters. <sup>9</sup> Don't call anybody on earth your father, because you have one Father, who is heavenly.

<sup>10</sup> Don't be called *teacher*, because Christ is your one teacher. <sup>11</sup> But the one who is greatest among you will be your servant. <sup>12</sup> All who lift themselves up will be brought low. But all who make themselves low will be lifted up.

### **MESSAGE: "Do As I Say, Not As I Do"**

When you were a youngster, did your family watch Liberace on TV? My mother made it a rule in our house. Granted he was a talented pianist and put on a good show. Once everyone bought a color TV, Liberace increased his viewing by wearing very flashy shirts and jackets. Why do you think he did that? Or what about Elvis who started wearing white jumpsuits and capes. Cher was a good entertainer but she mostly wore less clothes, not more sequins, when she was on stage to get attention. Why do you

think all three of them stepped up their wardrobe? TO GET ATTENTION, OF COURSE!

Today Jesus points out the gentlemen who did the same thing in his time; the Pharisees. I can almost picture them walking down the street of Jerusalem with long flashy robes and their noses in the air, missing the mud puddle under their feet as they trip over their hems and fall on their faces right into the mud puddle. I guess that's not in the Bible.

There are two audiences, not counting us, that this passage is meant for. The people in the time of Jesus and the people in the early church Matthew is trying to grow many years after Jesus ascended. I guess the Pharisees wanted to set examples for the people by praying the loudest, having the longest tassels on their prayer shawls, having the most beautiful and longest robes, and the longest phylacteries with boxes on their foreheads. See how pious they are?

Jesus was not impressed. Jesus instructed his followers that it is not by privilege, place, and preference but by obedience, humility, and service that the community of faith is established.

In Verse 1, the crowds are included in the audience for the sayings that follow. Matthew, the author, seems to be putting together many of Jesus' sayings that he has preached over the months. However, it is clear at least beginning in verse 5, that

the real audience consists of the disciples, for it is to them the warnings and instructions are addressed. In other words, in Matthew 23:1-12 Jesus is talking to Matthew's church, and especially to its leaders.

What is Jesus saying to the church in his time? In general terms, Jesus warns against arrogance and self-exaltation among leaders in the faith community. The method of the warning is to point to the scribes and Pharisees as negative examples.

That the scribes and Pharisees were skilled in and devoted to the precepts of Moses is not questioned. That they were successors to Moses as teachers of Israel is accepted and affirmed. The warning, however, points elsewhere to two glaring weaknesses among scribes and Pharisees: the failure to practice their teaching and the love of place and honor. They expected to be seated at the head table at banquets and in the front row if there is entertainment.

Matthew's rebuke seems general, as though all scribes and Pharisees were guilty. Actually, the rabbis themselves lamented and condemned these evils among their number, just as Christian leaders do within their ranks.

There is no question that Matthew is not simply reciting the flaws to be found among synagogue leaders so the Christian leaders can say, "I thank God

I am not as they are," thereby revealing that they are. Matthew is addressing the problem that infected Judaism, early Christianity and the church ever since - the love of place and preference among the servants of God.

The point of this text is strong and is found repeatedly in the teaching of Jesus. Neither the problem nor its solution lies in clothing and terms designating one's place in the community. Until the model of Jesus' ministry is embraced, games such as prizes for the most humble will continue. Amen.

#### **ST JOHN CHOIR- "Find Us Faithful"**

**Mohr and Christopher**

#### **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:** We bring the first-fruits of our labor and toil to honor our Creator and give thanks for the wonder of life. We want to share the steadfast love of God through the ministries of

this church and through our mission for others near and far. Let us give with joy.

**OFFERTORY: “Sweet Hour of Prayer” Gene Clarke**

**\*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:**

**Let your Word be at work in us, gracious God, and through the offerings we present for your blessing. We offer here our support for the work of teaching, preaching, and good counsel, our assistance for those who are burdened and hungry and lost, our encouragement for questioners, seekers, and risk-takers intent on leading a life worthy of your approval. We are all your students. Let us also be your humble servants, through the offering of our substance and ourselves. Amen.**

**HOLY COMMUNION**

**INVITATION:** This table is for all Christians who wish to know the presence of Christ and to share in the community of God’s people. This is the table of grace that was promised to our ancestors as they made their Exodus from Egypt. In Christ, manna in the wilderness becomes the bread of life. In the Lord of life, water from a rock becomes the living stream of Christ’s grace. The promised land comes to us in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. Come to the table of grace. Drink from the cup of salvation. Hold fast to the love of God. Do this and your cup will be filled with a living water that wells up into eternal life.

### **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

May the Spirit be with you. **And also with you.**  
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to God.**  
Celebrate God’s love. **It is right to give God our thanks and praise.**

We give thanks and praise to you, O God, our guide and guardian! We celebrate your divine creativity that called forth the heavens above and the earth below.

We praise and glorify you for creating us in your image, and for taking us by the hand as we traveled

the road of life together. We bless you and thank you for your help and for your guidance along the way. From the days of wandering Arameans and brave young prophets, you have shown us the path of faithful living.

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 holy is our guide on the journey, Jesus Christ, who sees us safely through the rapids of life.

On the journey to the cross, Christ sat at table with his disciples, gave thanks and offered not only bread and wine, but the bread of life and the wine of salvation, saying; "Take, eat, this is strength for the journey, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Drink from this, all of you. This is my life for the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts of love and grace, and your presence with us along the way, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving; As your covenant people seeking to honor your image within us, we proclaim the mystery of faith.

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

**PRAYER OF CONSECRATION:** God of love, send your Holy Spirit upon us, that we might receive the bounty of your hand and have the strength we need to walk with you on the journey of faith. Touch these gifts of bread and wine with your Spirit, that they be signs of hope and promise to a world in need of new beginnings, through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

#### **SHARING THE ELEMENTS**

The journey of faith, stirring within you. The courage of Christ's Spirit, working through you.

#### **\*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: 539**

**“Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?”**

**\*RESPONSIVE COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

ONE: Our hunger and thirst are being satisfied.

Our fainting souls have found refreshment here.

**MANY: Surely God has been with us and helped us.**

**Our cries have been heard in this place.**

ONE: God sends us out, purified, forgiven, and equipped. We can be sure that God is with us every day.

**MANY: We can be confident that God will teach us.**

**Day by day we can learn as we serve.**

ONE: We commit ourselves anew to living God’s word. We ask God to bless and multiply our efforts.

**MANY: God will provide a way for us through life’s deserts. God will go with us to make life fruitful.**

Amen. 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: “Festal Postlude” Chester Nordman**

**PRAYER LIST:** Cindy Jablonski, Ginny Ganschietz, Carol Bulva, 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, our Beloved Country.