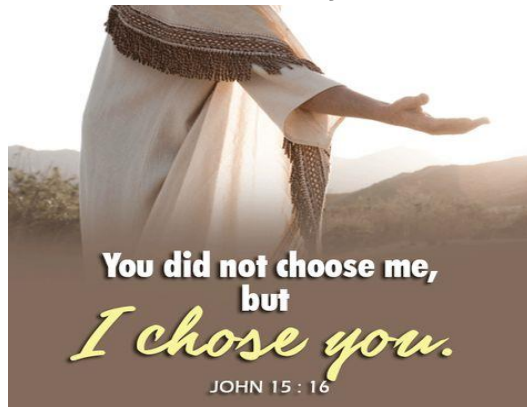


SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
JOHN 15: 9-17



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. Jacob Nault
Communion Liturgy – Rev. Thom Shuman
Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.
Respond with words in bold print.

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Christ gives us a new commandment:

Many: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

One: When we love one another as Christ has loved us, we will live lives full of joy.

Many: We will live with God’s love deep in our hearts.

One: Let us worship the one who shows us how to love.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***INVOCATION:**

Loving God, we remember your Child’s commandment to love one another as he has loved us. May this time of prayer and reflection remind us of the love we have in Jesus. As we leave this sacred space, may we be filled with joy as we share his love with others. Amen.

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

Jesus, our sibling and friend, we confess that we do not always love one another. Our divisions and disagreements so often prevent us from knowing the joy of meaningful relationships. Even as we seek to follow your example, we forget that we are chosen and appointed by you to bring hope to a weary world. Help us renew our focus and live by your will...that we may follow you with joy in our hearts. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Jesus no longer calls us servants, but friends. Each relationship is a new opportunity to abide in Christ’s

love, and a reminder that we can start again.
We are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

***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 two more times.) (end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Acts 10:44-48

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on everyone who heard the word. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ They heard them speaking in other languages and praising God. Peter asked, ⁴⁷ “These people have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. Surely no one can stop them from being baptized with water, can they?” ⁴⁸ He directed that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited Peter to stay for several days.

SECOND TESTAMENT READING: 1 John 5:1-6

⁵ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God. Whoever loves someone who is a parent loves the child born to the parent. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep God’s commandments. ³ This is the love of God: we keep God’s commandments. God’s commandments are not difficult, ⁴ because everyone

who is born from God defeats the world. And this is the victory that has defeated the world: our faith. ⁵ Who defeats the world? Isn’t it the one who believes that Jesus is God’s Son?

Testimony about Jesus

⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ. Not by water only but by water and blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

***GOSPEL LESSON: John 15:9-17**

Love each other

⁹ “As the Father loved me, I too have loved you. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete. ¹² This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than to give up one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I don’t call you servants any longer, because servants don’t know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You didn’t choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you could go and produce fruit and so that your fruit could last. As a result, whatever you ask the Father

in my name, he will give you. ¹⁷ I give you these commandments so that you can love each other.

These are the ancient words revealed to us new.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "Gifts from Jesus"

When I was in seminary, our Preaching Professor stressed two things we should always include in our sermons. Number one was to always preach the good news of the Gospel. The second thing was that at the end of our sermons, is the congregation thinking "so what?" In other words, the preacher must always leave the congregation with some words they can take home with them to "use" to help them grow as Christians.

I can honestly say, I don't always do that. However, today will be the exception to my inadequate sermons. Why, you might ask? IT WAS THE WORDS JESUS SPOKE THAT I JUST READ. "As the Father loved me, I too have loved you." Jesus loves us!! With words like that how could I miss?! IT'S THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL AND LOVE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU AND USE. Jesus did the hard work for me.

These passages from the Gospel of John 15th Chapter, have many words and thoughts THAT ARE GOOD NEWS AND THAT that we can take with us; such as the Good Shepherd. The good vine. So many images that Jesus gives us to help us understand our

relationship with Jesus and his Father. None more so than verses 11-17. I'll read from a different translation. The words of Jesus, "I have spoken these things to you that my joy might be in you and that your joy might be complete." *Hold on to that word, joy.*"

#2. "This is my commandment, that you love one another." *Wouldn't that be grand if everybody loved everybody. Ah, peace.*

#3. "You are my friends I no longer call you slaves. Slaves don't know what the master is doing, but I have told you everything that I heard from my father." In other words, we are equal.

And here is the "biggy." #4. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." *We have all been chosen to be here. Right here. You might have thought that you chose to get out if bed and come here this morning. NOPE. Jesus chose you to come here this morning. You know why? Because he knows that you can do as he asks.* His next words, "I have appointed you to go out and to bear fruit, of such a kind that will remain."

What does bear fruit mean? One definition means to be successful especially after a lot of work or effort. It also means to multiply or expand. If an apple tree bears fruit, it means there are many apples on the tree. The tree made more. Another definition is to be successful and produce good results. HOW DO YOU PICTURE US, THE CHOSEN ONES IN THIS ROOM, TO BEAR FRUIT WHICH WILL STAND THE TEST OF TIME.?

And in all these words, images, accolades, encouragement, confidence in us, friendship, and love, We have this promise from Jesus. The Father will give you whatever you ask, IF YOU ASK IN THE NAME OF JESUS. If you don't feel comfortable asking for something and NOT using the name of Jesus, perhaps you don't need it.

And through all of this, my friend, we are to be joyful! Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God everywhere, God with us, God in us, we may find you and know you anywhere. We are grateful that you consider us friend, chosen, and capable of doing what you ask. But we are not so confident in ourselves. We cry, and whine, and give excuses on why we can't bear fruit for you. You display great patience with us. But You have not left us orphans. You have given us the Holy Spirit to help us find our way through the journey to follow your son, Jesus. Thank you.

Compassionate God, hear our prayers for all who have been affected by the many shootings in our country, the demonstrations in the streets on campuses where people are hurt. It's one thing to have an opinion, but hurting others is never the answer. Help us find the peacemakers among us.

Healing God, hear our prayers for all who are troubled in mind and circumstance. Restore to health those who are sick and those recovering from surgery.

May they, with new health and strength, give thanks to you and for those who have cared for them. We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, as we pray together.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

Jesus has appointed us to bear fruit that will last. Fruit that will bring love and justice. Joy and hope. Bring what you can; together, the gifts we offer can transform lives.

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

Loving God, we remember that one of Christ's most important commandments is loving one another. With these gifts, help us show this love in our words and actions, caring for the vulnerable and offering hope in times of despair. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION:

Come to the Lord's Table, all you who love him.
Come to the Lord's Table, after your confession of sin.
Come to the Lord's Table, and be at peace.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

May the God of creation choruses be with you!

And also with you!

God sings of hope and grace to your hearts,
people of God!

We open them to be filled with the wonder of love.

God welcomes your songs of praise and joy.

**We lift our hearts and voices in thanksgiving
to the composer of all!**

Maestro of the Universe: the song began low and quiet,
barely disturbing chaos, but then it slowly grew in
tempo as you beat out the rhythm of creation,
light, sharp and clear, like the blast of a trumpet;
the hills and valleys bursting forth like the beat of the
tympani; water running clear and free like arpeggios on
a piano.

You composed all this, and more, for those created
in your image, and filled with the music of your heart.
We thought your tunes burdensome, and turned our
ears to the discords of sin, temptation, and death.
You wrote new tunes, to the same words of hope and
promise, sending the prophets to play them in the
streets where we wandered, but we continued to
dance to the music only we could hear.

So you sent Jesus to us, loving us enough to send us
the very One who could bring us home.

So, with those who have sung the song of grace and
hope in every time and place, and with all who are just
learning the words, we lift our voices in praise to you:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God of beauty and joy.

All the ends of the earth sing praises to you.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes to sing a new song.

Hosanna in the highest!

Holiness is the melody of who you are, Gentle God,
and blessed is the Song of your heart, Jesus Christ.

As he loved you, so he loved us: keeping your word
close in his heart, he came singing of your gracious
love; abiding in your promises of hope, he came
bringing the harmony of peace for our fragmented
lives; coming to judge the world with righteousness,
he laid down his life for his friends, trusting and
believing that the funeral dirges they sang on that sad
Friday, would be rearranged as Easter cantatas
on that first morning of the new creation.

As we remember his life, death and resurrection,
as we seek to follow his command to love,
we sing of that mystery we call faith:

The Singer was not silenced by death;

the Singer was raised to new life;

the Singer will come to lead us home to God.

Pour out your joyful Spirit upon the gifts of the bread
and the cup and on your children gathered at your

feast. We would open our hearts to receive the bread of life, not with silenced gratitude, but with glad songs of joy. We would empty ourselves to be filled with the cup's compassion, not with speechless thanks but with shouts of praise. As we learn the new song of sacrifice on behalf of others, we would go to serve the brokenhearted; as we are given the instruments of praise, we would turn them into the means to transform the lives of the hungry, the homeless, the forgotten, the outcast.

And when our music has ended, and there is only the plainsong of life forever in the tender embrace of your peace, we will gather at the Table once again, hands and hearts, brothers and sisters, joining in the never-ending praise to you, Amen.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the sacrament of his body and blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

***BENEDICTION:**

Friends of God, as you leave this place, remember that God has chosen you to share the love you've found with a world of need. Go bear fruit that will last. Let

your joyful hearts be signs of hope in these anxious times. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: Sue Ganschinetz, Becky Ballard, Urban Baum, Ronald Bopp, Josh Mueller, Marilyn Paul, Syd Safriet, David Senieczyn, Yvonne Weber, Joan Williams, Ginny Ganschinetz

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING Wed. May 8 via zoom
7 pm.

BIBLE STUDY Thursday May 9 via zoom will be from
5:30 – 6:30 pm.