

Coping with COVID

Weekly Bible Study and Congregational Update

St. John United Church of Christ
New Athens, Illinois

Week of September 14
Issue 19

A Look at the Lectionary...

Our scripture lessons this week are an interesting mix that reminds us of the many ways that God provides for us. Sometimes, God's provision is an unexpected blessing, as it is in Exodus. Sometimes, God's blessing sustains us in times of trouble, as it does for Paul in Philippians. And, sometimes, God's blessing comes in a way that we resent, and is given to those whom we least think deserve it, as happens in the parable Jesus tells in Matthew.

In Exodus, we find the Hebrew people complaining on their wilderness journey, as they often did. In this case, they're howling that it would've been better if they'd died in Egypt, where they supposedly had plenty to eat, rather than starving to death in the desert.

As Moses sees it, the people's hunger was God's way of reminding them that "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." God does indeed provide manna as well as quail to satisfy their cries for bread and meat.

Psalm 105 retells that story, as well as the story of God providing water for the people in the wilderness. All of this comes, the psalmist said, because God remembered God's holy promise first made with Abraham.

From what we can gather reading Philippians, the apostle Paul, imprisoned in a Roman jail, faces an uncertain future that could include his death. Part of him actually looks forward to dying so he can be with Christ and share in his resurrection life. The pastor in him, though, knows there's so much more he could accomplish in this life. Paul is torn between the two alternatives. In the meantime, Paul notes that his imprisonment has spread the good news of Jesus to even more people, including many Romans.

As is always the case in Scripture, context is hugely important with regard to this week's reading from Matthew. Jesus' parable hearkens back to chapter 19, where a rich young man comes to Jesus wanting to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life.

He's been an exceptionally good person, at least as he tells the story, obeying all the commandments. He comes off sounding like a self-righteous jerk, someone who supposedly "knows" where he stands with God, and assumes that's at the top of God's "good list."

The thing is, when you're the Son of God, you kinda have an inside straight where that's concerned. Jesus is quick to knock this spiritually conceited young man down a few pegs. First, he tells him to sell his possessions and give everything to the poor. Then Jesus tells the young man to follow him. That didn't go over so well, Matthew says. "He went away grieving, for he had many possessions."

Now Jesus tells the familiar parable about workers in a vineyard. The vineyard owner pays those hired last first, and gives them, even though they worked for only an hour in the cool of the day, the same amount as the gives to those who worked from sunup to sundown.

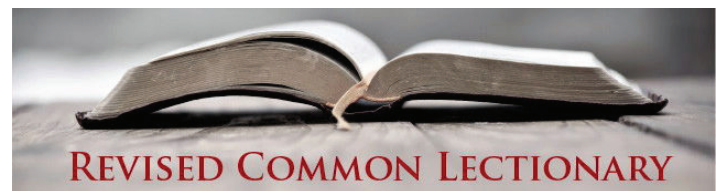
Naturally, those who worked the longest grumble the loudest. They complain that they deserve more. But the owner of the vineyard in the parable says, "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I'm generous?"

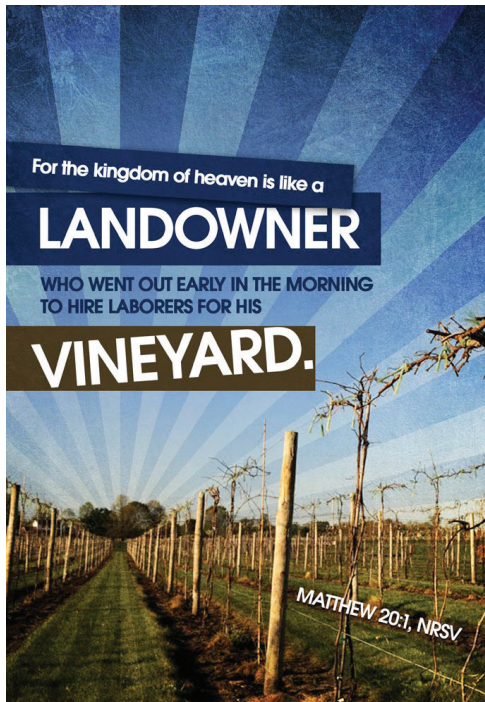
Then Jesus adds the real kicker, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

God chooses to be generous and give the same grace to the least, the last, and the lost as God does to those who think they've "earned" it or "deserve" it. Jesus later shows how far he'll go to make that point, giving himself over to both the pious Jewish leaders as well as the cruel Gentiles to die for them all — as well as for us.

Following Jesus means giving up our resumes, spiritual or otherwise. It means recognizing our need for grace. It means laying aside our ambition for riches and power and embracing instead a life of generosity. It means understanding that we don't find our final worth in titles, power, or wealth, but in serving others.

Pastor Bob





SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 20, 2020

Year A, Revised Common Lectionary

Exodus 16:2-15

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?"

And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him--what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD."

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'"

And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. The LORD spoke to Moses and said, "I have heard the complaining

of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45

- ❖ O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.
- ❖ Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
- ❖ Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually.
- ❖ Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
- ❖ offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.
- ❖ Then he brought Israel out with silver and gold, and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.
- ❖ Egypt was glad when they departed, for dread of them had fallen upon it.
- ❖ He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night. They asked, and he brought quails, and gave them food from heaven in abundance.
- ❖ He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river.
- ❖ For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant.
- ❖ So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing.
- ❖ He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,
- ❖ that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD!

Philippians 1:21-30

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.

Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing.

For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well-- since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Matthew 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

"When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

"When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

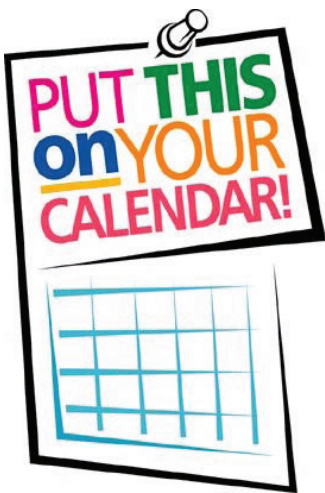
“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'

“When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.

“And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

“But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”



- *New Beginnings is selling pastry puffins and popcorn.* Please go to <https://my.perfectpastries.biz/signup/4L7K> to place an order. Popcorn will be directly delivered to your home, but pastry puffins must be picked up here at church.
- *Hog raffle tickets* are now available from any Church Council member or through the church office.
- *Our congregation's annual Wurstmart will be held September 27* – drive through and carry out only. Give the church office a call at 475-2947 to find out how you can help.
- *If you would like to purchase any meat from the Country Store,* we need your order in the church office by Friday, September 18. All orders will be pre-packaged and ready for pickup during the Wurstmart.
- *Capital Campaign co-chairs Scott Harriss and Keith Reuss will be in the sanctuary* at 6:30 PM on September 29 and October 6 to meet with anyone who has questions about the campaign, its projects, or its progress.
- *Our confirmation students will be confirmed at an outdoor 10:30 AM service on October 4* here at church. Our students will present their statements of faith, and then we'll celebrate the rite of confirmation. 8 AM worship and 9:15 AM Zoom services will still both be held.
- *Warnecke Building Restoration* will be finished here at the church by the end of the week. Preliminary work on the boiler replacement project will begin soon, but the bulk of what needs to be done won't start until after the Wurstmart on September 27. Roofers will be here next week, replacing the roofs over the daycare and doughnut room areas. Please avoid parking in the back lot while they're here.

Here are this week's prayer concerns,
as best we're aware in the church office:

- Dave Park passed into God's care last week following surgery. Please keep Dave's wife Connie, his daughter Georgia, and all of Dave's extended family in your prayers. A memorial service will be held this Saturday, September 19, at 2 PM on the St. John south parking lot. Please bring your own lawn chair and, of course, a mask.
- Vera Kinzinger passed into God's care early last Saturday. A public visitation will be held from 4-8 PM today, September 15, followed by a private funeral service at 11 AM tomorrow, September 16. Our prayers are with all of Vera's family and friends.
- We are also saddened to announce the deaths of June Loesche and Marilyn Roley. Funeral arrangements for both are pending. Our deepest sympathies to their families.
- Crystal Bova's grandfather's battle with COVID has moved to the ICU, where he's been intubated. His hospitalization has also resulted in a worsening of his dementia. Extra prayers are much appreciated.
- On a happier note, Crystal and Nick Bova's children, Isabelle and Andrew, recently ran a lemonade stand to raise money for CESNA, and collected \$55. Congratulations and thank you!
- Kim Juenger has returned home, though still has a number of medical issues to deal with in the future.
- Even as we mourn the passing of a number of our members into God's care, we also celebrate God's gifts of healing and renewal that have come to several individuals and families who had been listed here for days or even weeks, but are now well along the path to recovery. As Christians, we say in faith that hope and new life will always have the last word!



“I HAVE NOT STOPPED GIVING THANKS FOR YOU, REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS.”

EPHESIANS 1:16, NIV

Here are the folks on this week's congregational prayer calendar:

- Bob Rutkowski
- Dawn Murphy
- Casey and Jennifer Sabaleski, Isaac, Ethan and Levi
- Cheryl and Michael Schanuel
- Dan and Stephanie Schatte, Morgan and Brandon
- Dennis Schatte
- Daron Schatte, Davin and Derrick
- Drew and Lori Schatte, Demi
- Dean and Marilyn Schatte
- Clyde and Deb Scherle

**Did you know that St. John's has an
online church directory?**

We'd like all of our members and friends to use it and be included in it. Here are the directions for setting up your account and accessing the directory.

Directions for Accessing the On-Line Church Directory

NOTE: You must have an active e-mail address on file in the church office to access our online directory.

*If you're unsure whether or not you do,
please call the church office
or e-mail Beth at stjohncuccdesknail@att.net.*

- Go to: www.instantchurchdirectory.com
 - Click "Church Member Sign In" (Top right)
 - **First time only** click "Create Login" (Blue highlighted section – Middle of page)
 - Enter your e-mail address (Your address must be on file in the church office to access this)
 - Create your own password
- *****
- You'll receive a confirmation e-mail at the address you listed. Follow the directions it gives you to confirm your sign in.
- *****
- Once you've created and confirmed your e-mail address, you're ready to log in at: www.instantchurchdirectory.com
 - Click "Church Member Sign In" (Top right)
 - Sign in using your e-mail address and the password you created.

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday: Acts 18:12–19:10

Monday: Ezekiel 4-7

Tuesday: Ezekiel 8-11

Wednesday: Ezekiel 12-14

Thursday: Ezekiel 15-18

Friday: Ezekiel 19-21

Saturday: Psalms 106-108

VERSE TO REMEMBER

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ... As far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

—Psalm 103:10-12

TIMES TABLES

DIRECTIONS: Complete this math puzzle just as you would complete any crossword. All the clues involve basic multiplication problems. If you're a whiz at your times tables, you should be able to complete this puzzle in five minutes or less! Try it!

1	2		3		
4			5		6
		7		8	
	9		10		
11			12		
		13		14	15
	16		17		

Across

1. 1×11

3. 7×3

4. 4×5

5. 7×2

7. 8×9

8. 11×5

9. 6×10

10. 5×6

11. 11×3

12. 7×6

13. 9×6

14. 7×12

16. 6×11

17. 11×10

Down

1. 11×11

2. 2×5

3. 2×12

5. 2×6

6. 3×5

7. 10×7

8. 10×5

9. 9×7

10. 8×4

11. 7×5

12. 4×11

13. 8×7

14. 9×9

15. 5×8

AMAZING FACTS!

- ❖ *Facetious* and *abstemious* are the only words that contain all the vowels in the correct order.
- ❖ *Almost* is the longest commonly used word in the English language with all the letters in alphabetical order

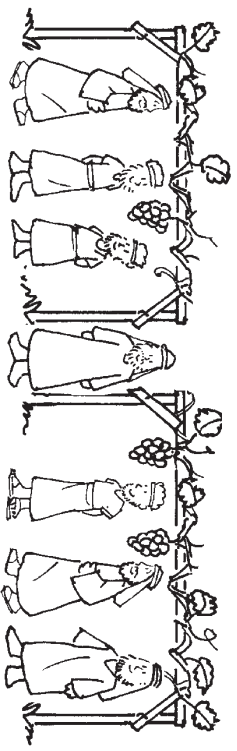


What did Jesus say to end this parable?

Write the letter that is in the first word but not the second. Then fill in the blanks.

- 1) told - old = _____ 8) sober - rose = _____
- 2) deal - ale = _____ 9) lawn - naw = _____
- 3) team - met = _____ 10) wink - ink = _____
- 4) meal - alm = _____ 11) time - met = _____
- 5) trash - star = _____ 12) after - tear = _____
- 6) smile - lime = _____ 13) kneel - leek = _____
- 7) moose - some = _____ 14) rate - tea = _____

“ _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 1 _____ 5 _____ 4 _____ 9 _____ 3 _____ 6 _____ 1 _____
 10 _____ 11 _____ 9 _____ 9 _____ 8 _____ 4 _____ 12 _____ 11 _____ 14 _____ 6 _____ 1 _____
 3 _____ 13 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 5 _____ 4 _____ 12 _____ 11 _____ 14 _____ 6 _____ 1 _____
 10 _____ 11 _____ 9 _____ 9 _____ 8 _____ 4 _____ 9 _____ 3 _____ 6 _____ 1 _____”



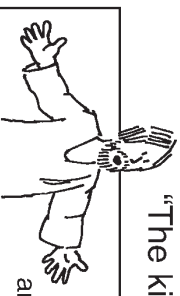
Children's Worship Bulletin™

Ages 7+

September 20, 2020 • Matthew 20:1-16

The Workers in the Vineyard

Jesus told a parable. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like ..."



Solve the sudoku puzzle. All the numbers 1-9 must be used once in each row, column and box. Then use the code to fill in the blanks.

5 _____ 2 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 9 _____ 1 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 4 _____ 1 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____

1 _____ 7 _____ 6 _____ 9 _____ ut _____ 7 _____ 5 _____ 4 _____ 2 _____ y _____

3 _____ 6 _____ t _____ 8 _____ 7 _____

m _____ 9 _____ 4 _____ 6 _____ 3 _____ 6 _____ 9 _____

t _____ 9 _____ 8 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 7 _____

1 _____ 9 _____ 4 _____ 7 _____ 4 _____ s _____

f _____ 9 _____ 4 _____ 8 _____ 3 _____ s _____

v _____ 3 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 5 _____ 4 _____ d."

6	L	A	O	7	3	1	R	8
7	8	w	5	2	R	9	6	3
4	3	O	H	w	6	2	E	5
5	R	L	6	8	1	7	I	9
9	6	8	7	I	2	4	5	1
3	w	7	4	9	5	N	H	2
2	E	3	w	N	H	A	9	4
8	5	6	2	4	9	I	1	7
1	O	4	3	5	E	H	L	6

AUTHORIZATION FORM

Name of the organization: **St. John United Church of Christ, New Athens, IL**

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY		ENVELOPE/DONOR #	DATE
Effective date of authorization: ____/____/____			
Type of authorization:		<input type="checkbox"/> New authorization	<input type="checkbox"/> Change donation amount
		<input type="checkbox"/> Change banking information	<input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue electronic donation
Last Name		First Name	
Address			
City		State	Zip
Email Address			
Date of first donation: ____/____/____	Frequency of donation: (please check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 1 st <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly on the 15 th <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-Weekly (every other week) <input type="checkbox"/> One Time	Amount of first donation: \$ _____	
Date of last donation (optional): ____/____/____		Amount of last donation (optional): \$ _____	
CHECKING / SAVINGS	Please debit my donation from my (check one):		Routing Number: _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Savings Account (contact your financial institution for Routing #) <input type="checkbox"/> Checking Account (attach a voided check below)		Valid Routing # must start with 0, 1, 2, or 3 Account Number: _____
I authorize the above organization to process debit entries to my account. I understand that this authority will remain in effect until I provide reasonable notification to terminate the authorization.			
Authorized Signature: _____ Date: _____			

If using a checking account, please attach a voided check at the bottom of this page.

Because We All Could Use a Laugh...

A pastor got all fired up with the Spirit one Sunday and preached, "Our church needs to get back to the basics. We need to become like a babe, and learn to get up on our hands and knees and crawl like we've never CRAWLED before." From the back of the sanctuary came a voice crying out, "Let 'er CRAWL preacher, let 'er CRAWL!"

Encouraged by the response, the pastor went on. "This church needs to then take one step at a time, putting one foot in front of the other until we can WALK with the Lord the way we should." From the back of the sanctuary the voice shouted, "Let 'er WALK preacher, let 'er WALK!"

Now the pastor was on a roll. "The church needs to then get into a stride where we can RUN for God. But first, it's going to take each and every member of this church to join in. You're all going to have to make a commitment to tithe, to study the Word and pray every day, and you're each going to have to be here whenever the church doors are open. Then and only then, can this church RUN for the Lord."

After a long a pause the voice cried out from the back of the sanctuary, "Let 'er CRAWL Preacher, Let 'er CRAWL!"