

United Church of Christ, First Congregational  
Norwich, New York  
August 29, 2021

INTRODUCTION

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

**PRELUDE** *I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone*  
Jason Handy, organ

Johann Pachelbel

**WELCOME** (Pastor John)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** (Linda Oehme)

GATHERING

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (Bob Oehme)  
God has lavished us with every perfect gift  
from above and called us to living intimacy  
through the beloved one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**INVOCATION** (Pastor John)  
Unchanging God, you have blessed us forever  
through the Beloved One, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Born again by your word of truth,  
let us live out your love, doing your word,  
caring for the weak and vulnerable in their distress,  
and ever pursuing your reign of justice,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN** *This is the Day* (#84)

Les Garrett, 1967

TIME OF SHARING

**CHILDREN'S MOMENT** (Linda Oehme)  
The Lord's Prayer

**GREETING OF PEACE**

ONE: The peace of Christ be with you.

**ALL: And also with you.**

**OFFERTORY PLEDGE** (Pastor John)

ONE: We love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

**ALL: We pledge our whole selves to God.**

ONE: We love our neighbors as ourselves.

**ALL: We pledge to do justice as Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation.**

ONE: We love one another as Jesus loves us.

**ALL: We pledge to be and become Christ's Beloved Community in our life together.**

ONE: We make disciples by teaching and modeling how to follow Jesus' Way of Love.

**ALL: We pledge to be Jesus' disciples sharing Jesus' Way of Love in the way we live our lives and practice our faith.**

## WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

### SCRIPTURE READING (Bob Oehme)

James 1:17-27

<sup>17</sup> Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. <sup>18</sup> In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

<sup>19</sup> You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. <sup>21</sup> Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

<sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. <sup>23</sup> For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves<sup>[c]</sup> in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. <sup>25</sup> But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

<sup>26</sup> If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

### SCRIPTURE READING (Lilit Danielyan)

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, <sup>2</sup> they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. <sup>3</sup> (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; <sup>4</sup> and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) <sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honors me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me;

<sup>7</sup> in vain do they worship me,

teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

<sup>8</sup> You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

<sup>14</sup> Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: <sup>15</sup> there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

<sup>21</sup> For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

### ANTHEM *We Are the Hands of Christ*

Words by John Parker  
Music by Joel Raney

No voice to speak of kindness, no eyes to see the pain;  
no heartbeat of compassion, no empathy remains.  
How will they hear the message that Jesus is alive?  
How can they know the truth unless it's through our lives?

Christ has no hands except your own  
to reach the world and make God known.  
God's love can change humanity by a touch alone.  
Christ has no hands except your own.

No truth to scatter darkness, no candle in the night;  
no warm illumination, no justice, no right.  
When will we recognize? Open our blinded eyes.  
We are the lighthouse to shine God's light!

Christ has no hands except your own  
to reach the world and make God known.  
God's love can change humanity by your touch alone.  
Christ has no hands except your own.

Touching the desperate, feeling their pain;  
reaching the hopeless in Jesus' name.

Christ has no hands except our own  
to reach the world and make God known.  
God's love can change humanity by our touch alone.  
Christ has no hands except our own.

No voice, no eyes, no hands except our own.  
We are the hands of Christ, the hands of Christ.

**SERMON** (Pastor John)

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

**INTERLUDE** *Adoration*  
Jason Handy, organ

by Gilbert M. Martin

**AFFIRMING OUR FAITH** (Jason Handy and Brad Morrison)  
***United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology***

ONE: We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,

**ALL: God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:**

ONE: You call the worlds into being,

**ALL: create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.**

ONE: You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

**ALL: You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.**

ONE: In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot,

**ALL: conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.**

ONE: You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,

**ALL: creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.**

ONE: You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others,

**ALL: to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.**

ONE: You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,

**ALL: courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.**

ONE: Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

**ALL: Amen.**

## COMMISSION AND BLESSING

**CLOSING HYMN** *God Be With You* (#81)

Words Jeremiah E. Rankin, 1880

Tune: GOD BE WITH YOU by William G. Tomer, 1880

**BENEDICTION** (Pastor John)

Listen to the life-giving words of the Beloved One, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Look into God's perfect law of liberty and persevere in God's blessing!

Live in God's love, caring for those in need from a heart filled and blessed

by the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**POSTLUDE** *Great King of Glory*  
Jason Handy, organ

Steven Scott

---

Permission to reprint, podcast, and / or stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE with license #735996-A. All rights reserved.  
Prayers, Call to Worship, Benediction reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word Worship Companion* © 2015