

IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Organist: Karen Cain
September 26, 2021

Pastor: Rev. Dana Schindler
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Extending God’s love with the work of our hands and hearts...”

.....
GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

Welcome to worship today at Immanuel United Church of Christ in Hamel, IL, where our mission is “Extending God’s love with the work of our hands and hearts...”

As we continue to celebrate our 150th anniversary, we are excited to offer a special welcome to those who were married in this church today.

.....
We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us today. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here! Please leave a comment to let us know you are here. Also note any joys and concerns you may have and feel free to greet each other in Christian love.

150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION will take place on Sunday, October 3rd. Conference Minister Rev. Shana Johnson will be preaching. Worship will be followed by a catered dinner. If you have not already sent in your RSVP please do so ASAP so we can adequately plan for our meal. **THIS SERVICE WILL BE AT 10:00 AM!**

Music used is covered under our CCLI livestreaming license # 4012842.
Today for our service, you will need your worship guide, paper, and a pen.

PRELUDE

Karen Cain

POINT TO PONDER

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

“Seek Ye First”

354 Chalice

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And His righteousness
And all these things shall be added unto you
Allelu, alleluia

Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and ye shall find
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you
Allelu, alleluia

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism cloth us with garments of your grace and feed us at the table of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

OPENING HYMN*“I Sing the Mighty Power of God” # 64 Chalice (3 vs)**

I sing the mighty power of God
 that made the mountains rise,
 That spread the flowing seas abroad,
 and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained
 the sun to rule the day;
 The moon shines full at God's command,
 and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of our God
 that filled the earth with food;
 God formed the creatures with a word,
 and then pronounced them good.
 Oh, how your wonders are displayed,
 where'er I turn my eye:
 If I survey the ground I tread,
 or gaze upon the sky!

On earth there's not a plant or flower
 but makes your glories known.
 The clouds arise and spread their showers
 by order from your throne.
 All life is but a gift from you
 and ever in your care;
 Wherever people gather, you,
 O God, are present there.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, who gathers us in the wilderness to redeem us, anoint us and make us new.

All: *Amen.*

One: Let us be honest, confess our sin, and receive God's promise of mercy.

One: God of grace.

All: *We have wandered far from your home; again and again we lose our way. We turn inward afraid of the world around us. We forget that you have saved your*

people before and promise to do so again. Do not remember the deeds of our past, but turn our faces toward the future, where your forgiveness is sure, your welcome is clear, and your love overflows. Amen.

One: Like a hen who gathers her chicks, God embraces you in tender care. Like manna in the desert, God feeds you with surprising mercy. Like a loving parent, God runs to meet you again this day, forgiving your sins for the sake of Christ, leading you from death into life.

All: Amen.

FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

Today we are going to talk about our stained glass windows. We see the pretty colors, but some of us may not ever really think about the stories they are meant to remind us of. These stories are called parables. A parable is a story that makes a point. It was meant to put ideas that are hard to understand in terms that people understood. The first one on my right reminds us of the parable of The Sower, the second one the parable of the Prodigal Son. Next, the parable of The Great Banquet, then the parable of A Net. The last one on this side is the parable of The Good Shepherd.

On my left side, we have the parables of The Mustard Seed, The Good Samaritan, The Rich Fool, The Pharisee and Publican, and The House on the Rock. Most of these parables or stories, are familiar, but some might not be.

Today's sermon will talk about the parable of the Prodigal Son. Prodigal means spending money or resources freely and recklessly; wastefully extravagant. So the Prodigal Son wasted the gifts his father had given him. We should always use what we have well, but when we don't, when we do the wrong thing, we can always apologize, learn from our mistakes, and try to do better. And always, God forgives us and gives us another chance.

PRAYER

Help us Lord, to hear the stories of our faith, that we might live so that others will know that we believe them. Amen.

HYMN

"Great is Thy Faithfulness"

86 Chalice

**Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father.
There is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not.
As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.**

**Refrain:
Great is thy faithfulness!**

**Great is thy faithfulness!
 Morning by morning new mercies I see.
 All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
 Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!**

**Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
 sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
 join with all nature in manifold witness
 to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.**

**Refrain:
 Great is thy faithfulness!
 Great is thy faithfulness!
 Morning by morning new mercies I see.
 All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
 Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!**

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
 thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
 strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow;
 blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!**

**Refrain:
 Great is thy faithfulness!
 Great is thy faithfulness!
 Morning by morning new mercies I see.
 All I have needed thy hand hath provided.
 Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!**

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable:

"There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but

here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

SERMON

"A Tale of Two Sons"

Rev. Dana Schindler

The younger son, the prodigal, left his father's home to go to a "far country." This young man felt confined by the comfort and protection of his father. Perhaps he chafed at following the rules. He wanted to be on his own, to "find himself," to experience the things the world had to offer him.

And so, he asks his father for his share of his inheritance—while his father is still alive.

It's as if he is telling his father that he is dead to him. And he left to go to his "far country." I can only imagine the sadness the father must have felt as he watched his son make what he had to know would be a big mistake.

The prodigal son set off on his adventure. As long as he had money he was popular.

As long as he was willing to share it, he was VERY popular. He had an absolutely wonderful time, EVERYONE was his BFF—best friend forever. He came from a good home with good clothes and food. Good opportunities. Imagine his surprise that, first of all it took so little time to run through what he must have considered a fortune and then, that his friends only lasted as long as the money did. As long as he had money and

possessions, he was Mr. Popular. Now that he is destitute, no one is the least bit interested. They have moved on to *new* BFFs.

The prodigal son had to hit rock bottom before the realization hit him: he had thrown away everything that was truly important and had held tightly onto that which was trivial.

Because we are human, we will venture away from God—we will seek acceptance by the world. When the world tells us we are not good enough by its standards, we will be devastated. But when we tire of the world and its superficial judgments, we have only to return to our spiritual home, to God the creator and parent, to Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit for the love, the acceptance, for the validation of our worth that we so desperately seek. The kingdom of God is where we are truly at home. When we accept ourselves as the beloved children and heirs of the kingdom that God claims us to be, then the judgments of the world are no longer important to us.

How do we do this? Like the prodigal son in our scripture, we have to recognize our own need and mistaken judgment. We may have to hit rock bottom before we figure this out.

It is only when he finds himself wanting to eat the pig food that he cannot afford that the prodigal recognizes the error of his ways. He decides that he will return to his father and confess, in hopes that he may work as a hired hand, not in the belief that he will be returned to his former position in the family. He hopes he will not be rejected, for then he would have no hope at all.

We are reminded that while God does not *require* us to confess our sins, confession is necessary for *us*. It is a sign that we understand our shortcomings. Only when we recognize we have done something wrong can we begin to take the steps necessary to change our behaviors. Only then can we request that God will create in us clean hearts. Only then can we really accept the forgiveness and grace that was there all the time. There is no need to ASK for forgiveness. There is only the need for us to *accept* it. We have to work past our feelings of being undeserving of God's love for us before we can claim it as our own. And we have to recognize the true value of that love and grace, in order to choose it over what the world has to offer us. We have to acknowledge not only *who* we are, but *whose* we are. Only then can we become heirs of the kingdom of God.

But wait! There was another son. The older son, who would, by chance of birth order, inherit 2/3 of his father's estate, had stayed at home. He too, has an important story to tell.

I just can't believe it!
I don't know who to be madder at!
I just can't believe it!

It just isn't fair!
 Here I am, day after day, week after week, year after year, working my tail off, and then
 THIS happens!
 I just can't believe it!
 I am so mad!
 I don't even know what to say or what to think!
 It just isn't FAIR!
 After everything I've done for my father, and now THIS!
 I just can't believe it!
 I love my father, but this is just TOO MUCH!!!
 That spoiled brat of his comes and asks for his share of the inheritance, and my father
 just
 GIVES IT TO HIM!!!
 What a rude, insolent snot he is!
 Whoever heard of such a thing?
 I mean, my father is nowhere close to dying, and his younger son DEMANDS his
 INHERITANCE!
 AND GETS IT!
 My father let him get away with that!
 I just can't believe it!
 Then, the sorry snot goes off and wastes all that money with wild women and drinking
 and partying.
 And if THAT isn't bad enough,
 The little snot has the nerve to come BACK!!!
 Not only does he come back,
 But my father actually
 LETS HIM IN THE HOUSE!
 He welcomes him with open arms,
 Gives him a new cloak,
 Puts a new ring on his finger,
 And
 THROWS A BARBECUE!
 He invites everyone we know to
 CELEBRATE!!!!!!
 I'm sorry, he says.
 WHO CARES?
 He's not the least bit sorry.
 He's just looking for a handout!
 What a piece of trash!
 Can you believe it?
 A BARBECUE, for God's sake!
 He wastes all that money, causes all that trouble
 And does he get into trouble?

NO!
HE GETS A BARBECUE!!!

In the meantime,
I've done everything my father asked me to do.
I've worked my rear end off,
Every day, I've overseen the servants.
I've gotten up at daybreak.
I've sweated my butt off.
Every. Single. Day.
Did I get a party?

NO!

No party!

No thank you, son!

NOTHING!

NADA!

ZILCH!

BUPKUS!

NOTHING!

I certainly wouldn't have let the jerk in!
I'd have locked the doors and told him to get lost!
I'd have asked him who he thought he was!
Then I'd have told the servants to make sure he NEVER stepped a foot on the property
again!

I just can't believe the NERVE of him.
Or that my father LET HIM BACK IN THE HOUSE!

I just can't believe it!

It isn't fair!

I don't know who to be madder at

My father or his son!

I absolutely HATE HIM!

A BARBECUE, he gets!

A BARBECUE!

And THEN my father has the AUDACITY to say
COME AND CELEBRATE with us!!!

CELEBRATE???

I celebrated the minute that lazy, good for nothing
Piece of trash left home!

Good riddance!

He never did anything around here without having to be begged!

I would choke to death if I ate one bite of that food.

I would scream if I had to stand there and pretend that I was HAPPY he came back!

He's sorry.

Yeah, he's sorry he's broke.

He'll be sorry until he gets the rest of my father's money.
 Well, THAT money is MINE!
 This land is MINE!
 EVERYTHING here is MINE!
 And there is no way HE'S gonna
 EVER GET HIS HANDS ON ANY OF IT!
 My father has LOST HIS MIND!
 "But you're always here with me."
 "Everything I have is yours!"
 THAT'S RIGHT!!
 AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT!!
 A BARBECUE???
 You've GOT to be KIDDING!!!
 You'd think that brat was the KING!
 (grumbling.....)

I invite each of us to consider how our own lives may be similar to one of these two sons. Have we gone our own way, ignoring that of value, until it was too late? Have we then realized that God was here with us all along, waiting for us to have faith and depend on God? Or have we been doing "the right thing" the whole time, but maybe not for the right reason? Do we see it as our "right" to be overly judgmental when others receive grace instead of justice? Do we expect our shortcomings will be automatically forgiven, but others should be harshly punished?

We have all been prodigal children. We have all wandered away from God in an effort to find what we want, whether we moved to a far country or stayed put. We have all squandered God's love without thought at some time, as we searched for the love we sought in all the wrong places. The Good News is that God, like the father in our parable, has always been here for us and is always ready to forgive our mistakes. We only need to come home and accept that forgiveness. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious God, as we celebrate our anniversary, let us remember the stories of our faith. God of Mercy, we give thanks for your ever-present love for us. As we wander far from home, as we seem bent on finding ways to separate ourselves from you, we are reminded again and again of your unending love for us. No matter how far we fall, we know that you are always ready to pick us up and dust us off, and that you never give up on us.

We ask this day for special blessings for our friends and loved ones who have needs that you know far better than we do. We pray that you will enable us to be an additional source of love and comfort to them. We pray for those who live in violence, fear, addiction, and hopelessness. As you comfort them, push us to create better systems

for them to live in. We pray for the leaders of all countries, that they may hear and see your vision of a world in which all needs are met so that we may live in peace and harmony, healing all divisions.

We pray for our church, its leaders, and its pastor, that those in positions of power will hear your guidance and lead our people well and that our people will trust us enough to follow. Push each of out of our comfort zones so that we will follow Christ with confidence and humility.

All these things we pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying: **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. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever Amen.**

GIVING OUR GIFTS

As we continue our worship through giving our gifts, let us remember how much we have received and return a portion of those gifts to help build God's holy kingdom of love and justice. Offerings may be placed in the offering plates outside the sanctuary or mailed to Immanuel United Church of Christ at 5838 Staunton Road, Edwardsville, IL 62025.

HYMN OF THANKS

The Doxology

382 HFG

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Gracious God, bless this portion of our inheritance from you. Help us to use our gifts to make your kingdom of love known throughout the earth. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"Lord, I'm Coming Home"

406 HFoG (3 vs)

**I've wandered far away from God,
Now I'm coming home;
The paths of sin too long I've trod,
Lord, I'm coming home.**

Refrain:

Coming home, coming home,
Nevermore to roam,
Open wide Thine arms of love,
Lord, I'm coming home.

I've wasted many precious years,
Now I'm coming home;
I now repent with bitter tears,
Lord, I'm coming home.

Refrain:

Coming home, coming home,
Nevermore to roam,
Open wide Thine arms of love,
Lord, I'm coming home.

My soul is sick, my heart is sore,
Now I'm coming home;
My strength renew, my hope restore,
Lord, I'm coming home.

Refrain:

Coming home, coming home,
Nevermore to roam,
Open wide Thine arms of love,
Lord, I'm coming home.

GOING FORTH TO SERVE As we go forth to serve, please remember our opportunities this week. Join us for:

SEPT. 26th STAINED GLASS WINDOWS SUNDAY After worship, we will have activities for all ages in the Fellowship Hall.

PRAYER GROUP Wednesday morning at 10:00 am on Zoom as we pray for the health of our church and our friends, family, and community. We hope to hear God's will for us in this time and place.

150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION will take place on Sunday, October 3rd. Conference Minister Rev. Shana Johnson will be preaching. Worship will be followed by a catered dinner. If you have not already sent in your RSVP please do so ASAP so we can adequately plan for our meal. **THIS SERVICE WILL BE AT 10:00 AM!**

HELP NEEDED FOR LIVESTREAMING Folks who volunteered to be part of the Livestreaming Team are needed. Dave S. will be happy to set up a time to teach you what you need to know and Mark and Frank will be happy to mentor you through the process.

TREATS FOR THE TRICKED Many people have been “tricked” by hurricanes, floods, and fires. We would like to “treat” them to much needed cleaning supplies. We will be collecting supplies to make cleaning buckets. Please purchase and donate items from the list or make a financial contribution by October 31st. Then on November 14th after worship, we will meet to fill our cleaning buckets to send to those in need. We have buckets for this purpose.

ITEMS NEEDED FOR EACH BUCKET:

- Four scouring pads
- Seven sponges, including one large
- One scrub brush
- Eighteen reusable cleaning towels (e.g. Handi Wipes or Easy Wipes)
- One 50 oz. or two 25 oz. bottle(s) of liquid laundry detergent
- One 16-28 oz. bottle of liquid disinfectant dish soap
- One 12-16 oz. bottle of household cleaner that can be mixed with water (no spray bottles)
- One package of 48-50 clothespins
- Clothesline, two 50 ft. or one 100 ft.
- Five dust masks
- Two pairs heavy-duty, waterproof dish washing gloves (Latex-free, non-surgical)
- One pair work gloves, cotton with leather palm or all leather
- 24-28 heavy duty or contractor type 30-45 gallon trash bags on a roll and removed from carton
- One 6-9 oz. bottle of non-aerosol insect repellent

All cleaning items must be new – all liquid items must be capped and securely tightened. Place all items into the bucket, making sure they are packed securely to avoid damage during shipment. Snap the lid on tight and seal with packing tape.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

OCTOBER

QUARTERLY MEETING October 10th following worship.

LECLAIRE PARKFEST October 17th. The Vision Team will have a dessert tent to raise funds for outreach.

THE BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY in Hamel is open on Mondays from 9:00am till 10:30am. All who need assistance are welcome.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Canned Corn | Canned Green Beans | Pancake mix |
| Syrup | Sugar | Flour |
| Chef Boyardee Ravioli | Pie Filling | Tomato Paste |
| Bars of soaps | Shampoo | Dish Detergent |
| Rice | Coffee | Evaporated Milk |
| Baked beans | Laundry detergent | |
| empty egg cartons and plastic bags | | |

CONCERNS

Maria S.	Harry S.	Lillie H.
Kathie R.	Martha K.	Carole G.
Tomiko J.	Sherri R.	Sherri's Sister
Rose O.	Roger W.	Kathleen L.
Michelle L.	Kristy K.	Dorothy D.
Jane B.	Mary Ann C.	Jake G.
Diane B.	Jane	Maurice M.
Rich R.	Wayne S.	Ray
Karen's Mother	Karen's Brother-in law	Schoeber Family
Our Church	Our Church Council	
Hitz Home workers and residents	Our country as we deal with pandemic	
Disaster Victims	Pastor Dana, as she leads	

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Ruth:	officeiucc@gomadison.com
Pastor Dana:	pastoriucc@gomadison.com

BENEDICTION

And now, until we meet again, may each one be held safely in the palm of God's hand. Amen.

POSTLUDE