

Worship
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
July 12, 2020

Introduction

God's word is like the rain that waters the earth and brings forth vegetation. It is also like the sower who scatters seed indiscriminately. Our lives are like seeds sown in the earth. Even from what appears to be little, dormant, or dead, God promises a harvest. At the Lord's table we are fed with the bread of life, that we may bear fruit in the world.

Gathering/Announcements

P. = Pastor

W. = Worship Assistant

A. = All in attendance

Prelude:

"Aria"

Flor Peeters

Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness

P. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

P. Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

P. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

P. Most merciful God,

A. we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P. In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the  Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

A. Amen.

Opening Hymn: # 854 "Blessing and Honor" *American Hymn*

- A.** 1. Blessing and honor and glory and pow'r,
Wisdom and riches and strength evermore,
Be to the Lamb who our battle has won,
Whose are the kingdom, the crown, and the throne;
Whose are the kingdom, the crown, and the throne!
4. Give we the glory and praise to the Lamb!
Take we the robe and the harp and the palm;
Sing we the song of the Lamb who was slain,
Dying in weakness and rising to reign;
Dying in weakness and rising to reign!
- P.** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

A. And also with you.

Kyrie (said)

W. In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

A. Lord, have mercy.

W. Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

A. Amen.

Canticle of Praise (said)

W. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.

**A. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

P. Let us pray:

Prayer of the Day

P. Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

God's word to Israel's exiles is as sure and effective as never-failing precipitation. Their return to the Holy Land in a new exodus is cheered on by singing mountains and by trees that clap their hands.

W. ¹⁰For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹²For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

¹³Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

W. The Word of the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 65: 9-13

W. ⁹You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is | full of water.

You prepare the grain, for so you provide | for the earth.

A. ¹⁰**You drench the furrows and smooth | out the ridges;
with heavy rain you soften the ground and | bless its increase.**

W. ¹¹You crown the year | with your goodness,
and your paths over- | flow with plenty.

A. ¹²**May the fields of the wilderness be | rich for grazing,
and the hills be | clothed with joy.**

W. ¹³May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak them- | selves with grain; let them shout for | joy and sing.

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

There is no condemnation for those who live in Christ. God sent Christ to accomplish what the law was unable to do: condemn sin and free us from its death-dealing ways. The Spirit now empowers proper actions and values in our lives and gives us the promise of resurrected life.

W. ¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

W. The Word of the Lord.

A. Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Acclamation

A. *Alleluia.* The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart. *Alleluia.*

The Gospel

P. The holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 13th chapter.

A. Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

In Matthew's gospel, both Jesus and his disciples "sow the seed" of God's word by proclaiming the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near." Now, in a memorable parable, Jesus explains why this good news produces different results in those who hear.

P. ¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.

⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹Let anyone with ears listen!"

¹⁸"Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.

²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²³But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

A. Praise to You, O Christ.

The Sermon: "Sowing the Seed"

In a monastery that trained young Christian brothers for various callings within the church, one brother lived in constant fear of being called upon to preach a sermon in the chapel. His apprehension grew with each passing day until finally he decided to approach the director of the monastery with a proposition.

"Sir," he said, "I am willing to do any menial job that you assign me. I would be delighted to go out into the fields and plow, fertilize and irrigate them by hand to increase the productivity.

Or just say the word and I will get down on my hands and knees and scrub the floors of the monastery or clean the lavatories. I would be even honored to polish the silverware, paint the window frames or cut wood for our fire.

I am willing and able to do whatever tasks you might ask of me. My only request is that you don't ask me to preach a sermon in the chapel. Feeling quite good about getting this out into the open, the young brother let out a big breath and settled back on his heels.

The director, however, looked at the young man and decided that a preaching assignment was exactly what he needed. "Tomorrow," the director told him, "you are to conduct the chapel service and preach the sermon."

The next day, nervous and awkward, the brother stood in the pulpit and looked out into the eyes of his peers. Not quite sure what to do, he simply asked, "Brothers, do you know what I am going to say?" They all shook their heads in the negative.

He continued, "Neither do I. Let's stand for the benediction. Peace be with you." The director was, needless to say, upset. He summoned the young man after the others had departed and said, "I'm going to give you a second chance.

Tomorrow you will conduct the chapel service once again, and this time I want you to give a message." So the next day the young brother took his place in the pulpit once again. He began his message in the same manner as the day before: "Brother, do you know what I am going to say?"

When they all nodded their heads affirmatively this time, he said, "Since you already know, there is no point in my saying it. Let's stand for the benediction. Peace be with you."

This time the director was livid. Once again he summoned the young brother. This time he said, "I am tired of your tricks. You've got one more chance to redeem yourself. You will do chapel tomorrow, and **you will preach a sermon.**

If you fail to do so, I will put you in solitary confinement on bread and water." The third day the scene was the same. The brother began just like the two previous days, "Brothers, do you know what I am going to say?"

Some nodded their heads in the affirmative. Some shook their heads in the negative. He then said, "Let those who know tell those who don't. Let's stand for the benediction. Peace be with you."

"Let those who know tell those who don't." Actually, the Christian brother's message that day is one that Jesus might have used. Jesus told stories with a purpose. He understood that people with diverse backgrounds and educational levels could all comprehend a simple story that taught a lesson.

So instead of "preaching at" his audience, he would often catch their attention with an entertaining story that would leave the listener thinking. In our Gospel for today, Jesus told the Parable of the Sower. He could have ended this parable with the words of the young brother: "Let those who know tell those who don't."

Now, in this parable, the sower is God and the seed is the Word of God. If the sower had not gone out with the seeds there would be no story.

We would not have to worry about those seeds that were eaten by the birds, or those that fell on the rocky ground, or those that fell among the thorns and weeds and got choked out. And we certainly would not have to worry about the ones that grew and thrived and bore thirty-, sixty- or a hundred-fold of grain.

And so, the sower went out to sow. He went out to plant the Word of God. He took the seeds in a sack and scattered them abundantly. That's the first step. He didn't worry about where all the seeds fell. Some, he knew would get eaten by the birds. Some he knew would not take root and would wither and die.

And some would most likely get choked out by weeds. But the sower also knew that if he got even a 10-fold, or if God were merciful, a 20-fold return on the good crop, he would be much farther ahead than when he started.

Indeed, you have to plant the seeds or nothing happens. And you have to plant the seeds in abundance.

Understand, we are called by God also to be sowers. We are called to plant and spread the seed which is the Word of God. And it is true, that as we sow the seed, that is, as we share our faith and God's Word, there will be a variety of hearers - just as there were a variety of soil.

The good news of Jesus Christ kept locked up in the confines of a church or a human body is like seeds in the bag. You can use the seeds to make flour for your own consumption and gratification, or you can take those seeds and plant them so that they benefit others too.

If you leave the seeds in a bag, eventually they will rot away and not be good for anything. Likewise, we can keep the good news of Jesus Christ to ourselves and find nourishment in it only for ourselves, or we can spread it around to benefit others also.

But if we do nothing, even the good news - the Word of God - becomes meaningless. The sower went out to sow. Now, we need to remember: a farmer also knows that he can only do so much, and that the rest relies upon other factors.

Like the farmer, you can work the soil, fertilize, sow seeds, and cultivate, but then you have to have faith that God will use what you have done and multiply your efforts.

In the 1998 baseball season, Mark McGwire hit 70 home runs to break the old record. But keep in mind, though, that as McGwire was belting home runs, he was striking out even more often - a total 155 times during the season, which is almost one strike-out per game.

This statistic reminds us that you can't hit a home run every time you go to bat, and a lot of times you're going to strike out. But we also have to remember that you have to keep swinging because you won't get a home run by just waiting for the perfect pitch.

The sower went out to sow. Not every seed grew into a plant. Not every plant survived. But he planted seeds so abundantly that he ended up with a plentiful crop. Yes, we are called to sow the seeds of the kingdom of God - make Jesus Christ known to others by what you say, what you do, and how you live. That is our mission as the people of God; the outcome is in God's hands.

The peace of God that passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: # 661

"I Love to Tell the Story"

Hankey

A. 1. I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story, because I know it's true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

Refrain:

I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

3. I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
I'll sing the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Refrain.

I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

The Apostles' Creed

W. Let us confess our faith using the words of the Apostles' Creed:

- A. I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

W. Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

A brief silence.

W. Gracious God, your word has been sown in many ways and places. We pray for missionaries and newly planted congregations around the world. Inspire us by their witness to the faith we share. Hear us, O God.

A. Your mercy is great.

W. Creating God, the mountains and hills burst into song and the trees and fields clap their hands in praise. We pray for the birds and animals who make their home in the trees, and for lands stripped bare by deforestation. Empower us to sustainably use what you have given. Hear us, O God.

A. Your mercy is great.

W. Reigning God, we pray for our nation's leaders. Increase their desire for justice and equality. We pray for our enemies. Bridge the chasms that divide us and guide authorities to a deep and lasting peace. Hear us, O God.

A. Your mercy is great.

W. Abiding God, care for all who are in need especially ***Kiersten Zomolsky, Richard DelPercio, Kenny Shoemaker, Richard and Kathy Hefflin, Pastor Cyril Hurnyak, Pat Brick, Greg Waldfole,*** those suffering from the coronavirus, and those whom we now name in our hearts before You For those who are doubting, renew faith. For those who are worrying, provide release. For those who are struggling, ease burdens. For those in fear, give hope. Hear us, O God.

A. Your mercy is great.

W. Renewing God, revive your church in this place. Nourish and nurture the seeds you have planted, that we might grow as disciples. Replace what has been depleted. Sustain our ministries and deepen relationships with the wider community. Hear us, O God.

A. Your mercy is great.

W. Caring God, be with us as we continue to live through this coronavirus pandemic. Grant us the grace to look to You, who turns all things to the good for them that love You. Grant the necessary wisdom and success to our scientists and doctors who strive to find the cures and vaccines so that this pandemic may be overcome and that we may return to a more normal life. May we show Christian compassion as we reach out to those experiencing grief and need during this time. Hear us, O God.

A. Your mercy is great.

W. Eternal God, we give thanks for all who have died. Comfort us in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. Hear us, O God.

A. Your mercy is great.

P. Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P. Lord, remember us in your kingdom and continue to teach us to pray:

**A. 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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING

P. The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with His favor and ☩ give you peace.
In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
A. Amen.

DISMISSAL

W. Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
A. Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE:

“Chaconne”

Louis Couperin

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