

Worship at Home for Sunday, July 12, 2020 The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost



In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While we cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

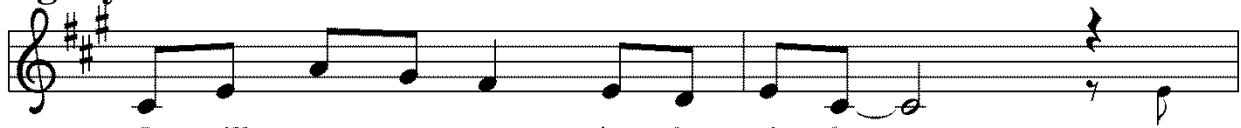
Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin. Reconciling God, **we confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.**

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn

You Are Mine

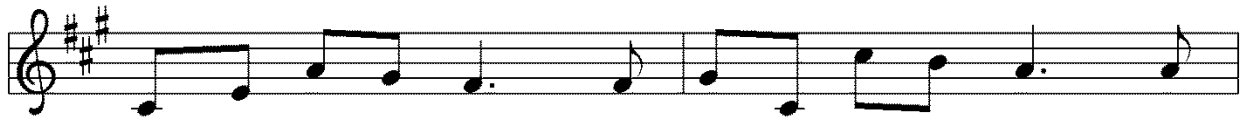
ELW # 581



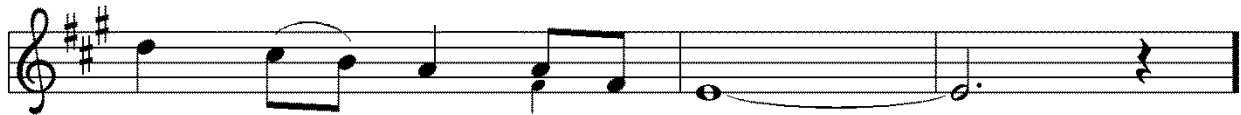
1 "I will come to you in the si - lence,
 2 "I am hope for all who are hope - less,
 3 "I am strength for all the de - spair - ing,
 (4) am the Word that leads all to free - dom, I



I will lift you from all your fear.
 I am eyes for all who long to see. (2) In the
 heal - ing for the ones who dwell in shame.
 am the peace the world can - not give.



You will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice. Be
 shad - ows of the night, I will be your light.
 All the blind will see, the lame will all run free, and
 I will call your name, em - brac - ing all your pain. Stand



still and know I am here. *To stanza 2*
 Come and rest in me. *To refrain*
 all will know my name. *To refrain*
 up, now walk and live! *To refrain*



Do not be a - fraid, I am with you. I have called you each by



name. Come and fol - low me, I will bring you home; I



love you and you are mine." *To stanzas 3 and 4*

Prayer of the Day

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.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

Semicontinuous First Reading: Genesis 25:19-34

Psalm: Psalm 65:[1-8] 9-13

Your paths overflow with plenty. (*Ps. 65:11*)

[¹You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; to you shall vows be fulfilled.

²**To you, the one who answers prayer, to you all flesh shall come.**

³Our sins are stronger than we are, but you blot out our transgressions.

⁴**Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there! They will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple.**

⁵Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation, O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the oceans far away.

⁶**You make firm the mountains by your power; you are girded about with might.**

⁷You still the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the clamor of the peoples.

⁸**Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous signs; you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.**

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.

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

¹¹You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.

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

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

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

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

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.”

Homily

Two decades ago, the world became enchanted by the Harry Potter series: books and then movies about an orphaned wizard who fought against evil to save the magical world. The first thing that happens when Harry attends wizard boarding school is that he is sorted into one of the four houses within the school. Each house has a motto, mascot, and colors, and the students in it tend to have common personality traits and skills: bravery, loyalty, ambition, creativity, and so forth. It became quite the fad for fans of the series to take internet quizzes to determine which house they would belong to. Most people seem to want to belong with the heroes, not the villains, which is true of how we usually identify with the characters in any kind of fiction, including the stories that Jesus tells his disciples and the crowds to help them understand the kingdom of God.

There are two kinds of parables that we find in the gospels: one is where Jesus tells a story and leaves it up to our interpretation. The other is where Jesus explains what all the characters and events are supposed to mean. It's more fun, I think, to figure it out ourselves, but this week it's one where Jesus gives us the answer—sort of. This is the one about a sower sowing seeds that fall on a path, on rocky ground, among thorns, and on good soil. The seeds produce grain to varying extents depending on the kind of soil in which they were sown. When Jesus explains the parable, the seed is the word of the kingdom and the different qualities of soil describe the openness or not, the retention or not, the endurance or not, the productivity or not of those who are hearing the word. For some it never has the chance to make an impact; some get fired up at first but their enthusiasm wanes; some get distracted or overcome by other things; even those whose hearts are the “good soil” yield a wide range of results.

So, all we have to do is be the good soil, right? And even aim to be the good soil that produces a hundredfold instead of thirty. Just as we want to be the hero of the story or one of the good guys in the movies, we want to be the high-yield soil, the ones who hear the word of God, take it to heart, and do the good work of living out God's commands, right? So, go ahead and be good soil. Right now, just will yourself to be good, deep, nutrient-rich soil, free from rocks and thorns. Now, I'm not a gardener by any stretch. My friend sent me a planter of succulents because I couldn't keep real plants alive, and I still killed the succulents. Then she sent an air plant and I managed to kill that, too. So I'm no expert, but when was the last time you saw soil improve itself? See, the thing about parables is that we don't always get to choose which part we play. That's why in our hymn today we ask, “Lord, let my heart be good soil...” because we can't control our hearts on our own.

The truth is that we are sometimes good soil, hundred-fold soil, and sometimes we're the beaten down path. We're not always in a place where the life-giving word of God can speak to us meaningfully, where it can take root and grow and change us so that we produce the good fruit like what is described in Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control...And just like the soil can't hydrate itself or fertilize itself or get the rocks and thorns out of itself, we can't always change the conditions of our lives to better prepare us to receive to the word of God. And, by the way, the people around us who frustrate us because they just never seem to get it—there are some circumstances that they can't change, either. But notice that Jesus doesn't call it the parable of the soil; Jesus calls it the parable of the sower. And The Sower, God, scatters seed everywhere, over all types of ground, all the time, generously and abundantly and with abandon. And so should we.

I don't know who said it first, but it was a wise person who pointed out that we're not called to be like other Christians, we're called to be like Christ. Similarly, if we want to find our place in this parable, we're not called to compare ourselves to other kinds of soil and somehow will ourselves to be better like others. We're called to do what God does, to be the sower, to sow the seed, not just where we think it has the best shot of producing the biggest harvest, but everywhere. It's fine if you want to exercise care and caution in your actual garden, making sure you plant seeds in precisely the places where they are likely to grow into the prettiest flowers or tastiest vegetables. But when we're talking about people, the gardener whom we are called to follow doesn't hold back in spreading mercy, love, joy, justice, and forgiveness far and wide and everywhere. Because we may be able to look at actual soil and know how well a seed will thrive, but we never know with people—nor is it our job to judge. Our job is to sow like God has sown for us—always giving us help and care and love and presence whether we're in a place to recognize it, receive it, and respond gratefully to it or not. We simply can't love too much; we can only sow with abundance and abandon and wait for the magic that happens when the seeds of love that we scatter fall on the good soil that God has prepared. May God mercifully prepare us to be good soil, and may we be the hands of God that sow the seeds of the word far and wide.

Hymn of the Day

Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil

ELW # 512



Lord, let my heart be good soil, o-pen to the seed of your word.



Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is un-der-stood.



When my heart is hard, break the stone a - way. When my heart is cold,



warm it with the day. When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.



Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.

Prayers of Intercession

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

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. **Your mercy is great.**

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. **Your mercy is great.**

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. **Your mercy is great.**

Abiding God, care for all who are in need (*especially*). 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. **Your mercy is great.**

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. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

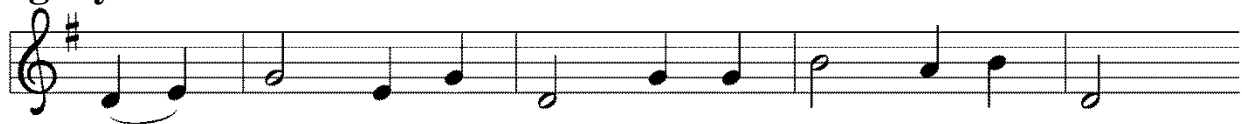
Blessing

God, the creator, † Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

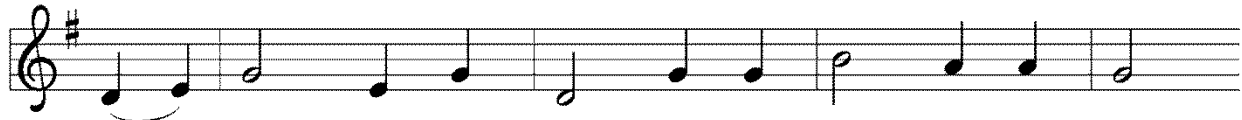
Sending Hymn:

How Firm a Foundation

ELW # 796



1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,
2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,
3 "When through fi - 'ry tri - als your path - way shall lie,
4 "Through - out all their life - time my peo - ple shall prove



is laid for your faith in Christ Je - sus, the Word!
for I am your God and will still give you aid;
my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be your sup - ply.
my sov - 'reign, e - ter - nal, un - change - a - ble love;



What more can he say than to you he has said
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
The flames shall not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign
and then, when gray hairs shall their tem - ples a - dorn,



who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?
up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand."
your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine."
like lambs they shall still in my bo - som be borne."

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you. **Thanks be to God.**

Join us on Zoom for Fellowship: ID 596-621-1441

Passcode: 8675309

Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14th at 6:30 p.m. viz Zoom.

Committee Chairs: Remember to get meeting dates and times to Lori via email (stmatthewluth@aol.com) so they can be on the weekly schedule.

Weekly Bulletins and Messengers are available on the website (stmatthewlc.com) for viewing or printing.

Prayers are needed for our homebound: Shirley Acker, Verna Blough, Fred Brandenburg, Jim Calvert, Clyde Claycomb, Betty Helsel, Doris Henderson, Gene Henry, Jere Hess, Gerald Hoover, John Klepser, Ginny Sell, Dan Sinal, Don Smith, Nancy Uber, Joy Williams.

Prayer Concerns: Carl & Dawn Alexy, John Aljets, Pastor Denise Arpino, Randy Barrett, Elaine Buehler, DJ Freedman, Dwight Ciccotelli, Greg Comer, Brian Fleck, Jim Freyer, Shari Gilbert, Ryan Guyer, Dan Hershberger, Marilyn Horton, Amber Ite, Connie Kensinger, Dan Kensinger, Janet Kreider, Darren Kreutzer, Donna Lovell, Kristen Malloy, Matt McCready, Pstr. Jerry McCuller, Ryder McDermitt, Betty McDowell, Aunt Mica, Lily Newman, Deb Peters, Alana Rhodes, John Russell, Paul Ruth, Dan Sinal, Barbara Smith, Luther Steele, Jim Stoudnour, Cindy Thomas, Trenton, Carol Weyandt, Pete Williams, Robert Winston, Jody Zelanko, and for our **Missionaries: Rev. Lesley Hand, On Eagle's Wings, Elizabeth Hendrickson.**

Those Serving Overseas: Kyle Guyer & Colin Guyer – Middle East

CORRECTIONS TO THE JULY MESSENGER

- The audio/video techs will NOT be paid for their services.
- The funds reinvest from the Rosamond Smith Bequest was \$25,000 NOT \$45,000.

July Worship Schedule—Please Note Changes

Sunday: 9:30 AM Worship on Facebook, 10:15ish Fellowship on Zoom

Monday & Friday: Hymn Devotions at 9AM

Tuesday & Thursday: Morning Prayer 9AM & Night Prayer at 9PM

Wednesday: Holden Evening Prayer at 8PM

Congratulations and Prayers go to Rachael Kensinger and Tammy Jo White upon their marriage on Saturday, July 4, 2020.

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Also, please be advised that our parking lot has surveillance cameras and that our worship service is video recorded.