

Worship at Home July 26th Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Announcements

August newsletters will be out very soon and St. Mark's task force and council continue to support outdoor worship every other week. **So we will be meeting in the parking lot August 2nd, 16th and 30th with individual communion packages.** Communion on line is the 1st Sunday of the month so it will be next week.

Thank you for your offerings also and to everyone who has continued to send offerings!
Congratulations to Cliff & Amy Bardell July 26th Anniversary today.

Children's Moment

Today Jesus tells a lot of parables. Parables is another word for stories that help us to understand something. Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven, where we belong to God is huge! God is always giving us gifts! Gifts of life, gifts of family, gifts of hope and gifts of love. Sometimes we are afraid and lately things have been really different because we do not want to make each other sick. God gave us masks so that we would be safe and other people would be safe too. God's love is so big, that we don't have to be scared. You are in Gods' kingdom of heaven. We say thank you God and wear our masks. God bless you all.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

We give you thanks, O God, O Living One, for you have created all, and you water the earth abundantly. Oceans and aquifers praise you. Rivers and streams bless you.

All life is sustained by you, our Source. Through baptism death is washed away forever. Here, we are grafted into the tree of life, with leaves for the healing of the world. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us, and throughout all creation. Cleanse us from our fears and drown our divisions.

Grant that all may drink of your mercy and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Passing of the Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5-12

Because Solomon did not ask for long life, riches, or the defeat of his enemies, God gave him what he asked for: wisdom to govern the people well.

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” ⁶And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?” ¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.”

Psalm 119:129-136

¹²⁹Your decrees are wonderful; therefore I obey them with all my heart.

¹³⁰**When your word is opened it gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.**

¹³¹I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments.

¹³²**Turn to me and be gracious to me, as you always do to those who love your name.**

¹³³Order my footsteps in your word; let no iniquity have dominion over me.

¹³⁴**Rescue me from those who oppress me, and I will keep your commandments.**

¹³⁵Let your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶**My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your teaching.**

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-39

These words celebrate the depth of God's actions for us. Through Christ's death for us and the activity of the Spirit praying for us, we are fused to God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. Nothing, not even death itself, is able to separate us from such incredible divine love.

²⁶The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³Who will bring any

charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Gospel according to Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near!" Here, Jesus offers several brief parables that explore the implications of this announcement for people's lives.

³¹[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³²it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." ³³He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." ⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." ⁵²And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Sermon

As a child, my younger brother and I loved to roll down the grass terraces at our home. My mother would tell us to stop rolling in the grass or we'll get chiggers. Chiggers, tiny little bugs that you could hardly see, would bite causing itching and rashes to the skin. Little things like chiggers, a sliver of wood in your hand, a grain of sand in your shoe, even that little something in your eye can surprise us that they can result in so much distress. And now we have the Covid 19 virus. Something we cannot see, microscopic and hidden from us has caused chaos in our lives. Everything we know has changed. Our work behaviors have changed, millions are without work. Our social gatherings are different and some have stopped completely. Worship has changed. People have become more divided about safety precautions and governmental

directions. We need the seeds of faith that Jesus speaks of more than ever.

So what does Jesus say in this pile of parables in our text today that are also about small hard to see things and everyday things we take for granted. The parable of the mustard seed reminds us that from the tiny seed a huge shrub that emerges, big and sturdy as a tree to house the nests of birds.

In the parable of the yeast Jesus explains that the kingdom of heaven is like rising dough, expanding to feed the hungry. Yeast may also suggest that opposition to the kingdom may come from within. The image of yeast occurs again in Matthew 16:5-12 where Jesus warns the disciples of the leaven of the religious leaders, who, with their teachings, *"lock people out of the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 23:13). Although we may think of the religious leaders as outsiders within the story, they belong to the same religious world as Jesus.

In the parable of the treasure hidden in the field we are reminded how Jesus said not to store up treasures for ourselves. *"If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."*

The parable of the pearl moves us in a different direction. Jesus cautions the disciples, *"do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you."* The swine may be a reference to the Romans; it is an insulting reference to those who oppose the kingdom.

It is interesting to me that Jesus chose activities from every socioeconomic group so that all may understand the kingdom of heaven. He chose a farmer, sower of seed, a homemaker and baker making bread, a fortune seeker of treasure, a merchant of pearls and a commercial fisherman. Whether these people are in an ancient world or today's world, these ordinary tasks invite us all to see the signs of the kingdom of heaven in our day-to-day lives; to recognize that the kingdom of heaven is emerging right before us.

There is hope in the mustard seed that gives new life to the birds. There is hope in the rising bread that God will take care of our needs and be with us as the bread of life. There is hope for those of us who are distracted by wealth and our own pleasures that the kingdom of heaven can be for us when we see to the needs of others.

The kingdom of God is there for those who keep the faith. In recent times so many have told me "Pastor, I didn't realize how much I need the Word of God in church until now."

We can hear the Word but in different ways for now. Remember the seed of faith is the kingdom of heaven revealed.

The kingdom of God doesn't close us to the world—it opens us to it. Amen.

Prayers for community and the world

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.* Merciful God, your reign is revealed to us in common things: a mustard shrub, a woman baking bread, a fishing net. Help your church witness to the surprising yet common ways you encounter us in daily life.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

When your word is opened, it gives light and understanding. Increase our understanding and awe of your creation; guide the work of scientists and researchers. Treasuring the earth, may we

live as grateful and healing caretakers of our home.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As the birds of the air nest in branches of trees, gather the nations of the world into the welcoming shade of your merciful reign. Direct leaders of nations to build trust with each other and walk in the way of peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for the saints according to your will. Help us when we do not know how to pray. Give comfort to the dying, refuge to the weary, justice to those who are oppressed, and healing to the sick **(especially Karla Gipe, Lyle Printz, Dorothy O'Connor and those preparing for surgery and recovering from surgery and illness. for those in care facilities: Sibyl Acker, Barb Bowen, Lois Garman, Tammy Karrow, Trudy Karrow, Jessica Kimpel, Hazel Pontnak, and Linda Scholl. We pray for those in military service: Logan Albrecht, JJ Bardell, Kevin Calderone Jr., Bryan Connell, Dustin Knapp, Brad Reigle and Travis Roop.)**

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You show steadfast love and direct us to ask of you what we need. Help this congregation ask boldly for what is most needed. Refresh us with new dreams of being your people in this place and time. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
God, the creator, ☩ Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,
bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

Dismissal

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