**3/17/24**

**Weeds & Seeds**

**John 12:20-33**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Good morning to those of you out there in the pews here with us this morning… and good morning to those of you out there on the conference call out there in your homes and in the community with us as well this morning. Today is a very important day to gather together as we draw ever so much closer to the end of Lent. Palm Sunday is right around the corner as you might know, and the beginning of Holy Week is right on the horizon. Today, we continue our Lenten journey in that march towards the cross with Christ. The strong imagery in our Gospel Reading today is actually very symbolic as we will be planting our own seeds in our continued efforts and ministry while moving forward and planning out the rest of 2024 during our Annual Congregational Meeting following our Worship Service. Those very seeds will be vital as they will show our commitment at this time, but they will also show our death in the past, and our commitment to life and new things moving forward. Those words and imagery may be a bit confusing, and they were to me as well until I took some time and dove into today’s Gospel Reading a bit deeper during my studies. As I share more of that very message during my sermon here this morning, I again am very mindful and thankful that we do indeed have this opportunity to join together with one another in-person or virtually and hear the message. We also have this unique opportunity to plan for our continued future at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church. So, again, thank you for being here.

As we unpack things together here this morning, I am actually drawn back to what I spent some time on a few days this past week. Unfortunately, we all know that weeds manage to grow everywhere and anywhere. They do not look great, and they especially ruin an appearance of certain areas where they should not be. With that being said, I spent a few hours cleaning out my driveway and parking area near the road from all those pesky weeds that grew up between the rocks. Fortunately, enough it provided me with some quiet time for reflection, and it even provided me with some time to listen to music in my headphones, and it even allowed me to say hello to a few neighbors that I do not always get to see. Now, there was a lot of crawling around, a lot of pulling down my shirt in the back and pulling up my shorts to make sure I was not blinding anyone as they drove up and down the street, and a lot of digging through the mud due to all of the rain we have gotten over these past few weeks. There are now two big buckets of weeds sitting in my parking area out front of my house blocking off the area that I am still not done with yet. There was a lot of effort between moving rocks and making sure that I pulled the roots out with those pesky weeds as well. Of course I do not want those things growing back, and I want my driveway and parking area to look great and clean once I am completed with this project. I do indeed know that no one planted these pesky things, but it still does not lead me to ask or think why in the heck they are actually growing. This is the very essence of how easy it is to be distracted by these very weeds, or for that fact the very distractions out there in the world. When we take our mind off of God just for a little bit, and we ask questions instead of doing the very work we know that we need to do to prepare our hearts and minds for the kingdom, then we lose sight of the message. When we manage to allow that frustration and distraction to creep in and take our sight off of the story and the purpose then we go astray. This morning is about pushing past the weeds, or those very distractions. I am not saying that it is not vital to take this time during Lent and clean up and prepare. That is indeed why it is called a season. Yes, it will even be vital that I continue weeding and finish this project, and then eventually help Heather weed and prepare the garden for the planting time coming this spring as well. This morning is about making ourselves aware of the very seed that was intentionally planted, and drawing our very focus on the seeds we will be planting during our Annual Congregational Meeting. Preparation has occurred, and now it is time to move forward. When we look towards all of those seeds, we also manage to focus on the one that would end up being the most important seed of them all. That seed would be Jesus Christ, as he would be planted in the ground following his death on the cross, and he then would spring back to life after three days. Alright, let me slow down here and not get too far ahead of myself.

As I learned in my studies and research for today’s sermon “A transformation occurs in germination. A seed is engineered for the long haul. The main bulk of the seed is comprised of complex starches. They’re a hard, stable molecule with a long shelf life. When the seed is placed in a moist environment, those starches break down into simple sugars. And once they turn into sugars, there’s no going back. The moisture also awakens the dormant germ embedded inside the seed’s interior. When it wakes up, it’s hungry and very happy to be surrounded by all of that sugar. The sugar’s energy allows the germ to grow. First comes a fuzzy white root. And then the tender green shoot emerges. Who knew that so much was lying inert inside the seed? Seeds are all about potential. Life remains dormant within the stable conditions of the seed. Seeds are built for stability. They protect the life within. But seeds weren’t created for staying seeds. They were made to sprout and grow. A seed is potential life; the seedling is life itself. In order for the seed to bring forth life – to become what it was destined to be – it must give up its perfect, protected environment. It has to give everything up! It needs to be planted in the earth and die.” (5)

“We will begin to understand how Jesus’ death is glorious when we grasp the seed illustration Jesus used. Just as the purpose of a seed is to be buried in the ground where it can germinate and grow into something productive, Jesus wants us to know that the purpose of his coming to this world was to be buried. Jesus came to die to pay for our sins. But death would not be the end of Jesus. Just as a seed that is buried sprouts and grows into a fruit-bearing tree, so Jesus would come back to life and bear fruit, eternal life for all those who believe in him. Therefore, Jesus’ death on the cross was not a defeat; it was an important step in accomplishing his mission.” (3)

We are all indeed called to mission as well. That is why we join together on Sundays, and during the week in our various groups and studies. That is why we join together and plan and discuss things in our Annual Congregational Meeting. Sometimes we may very well do these things to grow ourselves, but we also know that we do it to help one another grow as well. We are reminded and informed that “A believer will… find glory in service. Jesus said: “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me” (John 12:26). While the world says that if you have people serving you, then you have arrived, you have found glory. Jesus says, “Not so.” Real glory comes from serving God and one another.” (3) This is exactly why a story like the one I am going to share with you means so much in the heart of a believer, and those that the believer is also raising up and being raised up by. It is just like a gardener caring for its crop. As much as the gardener is doing the work, the garden is also working on the gardener. This story I am speaking of is about “A Sunday School teacher (that) was honored one Sunday by her church for 25 years of faithful service in teaching the young people of that parish. She was honored with a plaque and a pin describing her faithful service, her dedication and the love she gave so generously to her students. When… asked to speak, she said," I am surprised you would honor me this way, I’m getting so much out of it, it isn’t really work at all. I enjoy teaching the children, I enjoy seeing their eyes light up as they learn about Jesus’ love for them. I receive as much or more than I give." (4) I am quite sure Heather and Bonnie, and many of you that have taught Sunday School in the past can say they have experienced that. I am sure many of you that have raised your own children can say that as well. I am also sure that any of you that have gardened, or taken care of a few plants can say that as well. We do not just do things to be, we do things to learn and grow ourselves and others. That is the essence of the Gospel and our mission here on earth.

“There is a seed within each one of us, too. Its germ has been embedded there by God. It wants to emerge. It desires to sprout and emerge from you. But it can only do so as you spend yourself. Your talents, your wisdom, your riches, your energy, your passion – these are the resources of your seed. But what will you do with them? Will you keep them perfectly preserved within you? They’ll stay right there, just for you. But if you do, no one, not even you, will ever get to see the real you. For that self can only be seen when you allow these precious resources to be poured out in a life of service. That’s how your real and full self will be expressed. In the many ways you pour out yourself and all that you have in loving service, that’s how your single grain of wheat bears its harvest.” (5)

We learned from the example set by the most important and vital seed. As we listen to and hear more and more about him, we learn the very essence and importance of dying to self to grow for others, and to grow for him. Holy Week is coming, and we have a choice each year to accept the mission and purpose of the Lord our Savior and march towards that very cross with him. We also have the easier road that we have that option to discard him and the mission just like the weeds I was pulling last week. Now, I ask, what is your choice going to be?

Amen.

**References**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year B 2024

 March 17th, 2024

 Fifth Sunday in Lent

(2) Bible.com

(3) SermonCentral.com

 Christians Find Glory In Unlikely Places

 Contributed by Daniel Habben on Mar 22, 2015

 Scripture: John 12:20-33

 Denomination: Lutheran

(4) SermonCentral.com

 The Non-Exclusive Good

 Contributed by Tim Zingale on Apr 8, 2003

 Scripture: John 12:20-33

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 When It's Planting Time

 Contributed by Mary Erickson on Mar 22, 2021

 Scripture: John 12:20-33, Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

 Denomination: Lutheran

**John 12:20-33**

 Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover festival. Here

 Jesus’ words about seeds planted in the ground turn the disaster of his death into

 the promise of a harvest in which everyone will be gathered.

 20Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.

 21They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir,

 we wish to see Jesus.” 22Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip

 went and told Jesus. 23Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of

 Man to be glorified. 24Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the

 earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

 25Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will

 keep it for eternal life. 26Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am,

 there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

 27“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this

 hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 28Father, glorify your

 name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it

 again.” 29The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others

 said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30Jesus answered, “This voice has come for

 your sake, not for mine. 31Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this

 world will be driven out. 32And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all

 people to myself.” 33He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.