

Sunday, July 12, 2020 📅 6th Sunday after Pentecost

## Taking Root

Jesus makes it clear that merely speaking or receiving the good news of the kingdom of God is not always sufficient. Through preaching, Bible study, and worship God's word is planted in our hearts. But many things can get in the way of the word taking root, growing, and producing fruit.

The church is often tempted to do whatever it takes to bring in as many people, and as quickly as possible for the sake of increasing numbers. This is sometimes done through shallowness: appealing to popular trends, preaching an easy message that requires no repentance or sacrifice, or depending on the charisma of the messenger more than the substance of the message.

In his parable of the sowing of seeds, Jesus emphasizes that it takes understanding and depth for God's word to take root, to endure struggles, and to be sustained long enough to bear fruit. Shallowness only makes room for a quick growth that doesn't last.

In the church, what makes for depth that allows God's word to take root and last in our lives? Often it means connecting God's word to the deep, personal needs we bring. Is the Bible a book about things that happened a long time ago, or does it speak God's word for our lives today? Do we listen only to the parts of God's word that sound easy and make us feel good, or do we wrestle with messages of repentance and calls to seek justice?

Martin Luther taught the church that God's word comes to us as law and gospel. We don't get to choose which one we want to hear. We always get both. Both knowing we need God's mercy and hearing that God's mercy is a gift for us through Christ bring God's word deep into our hearts, where it takes root and lives. This is what it means to understand God's word with depth.

## A sower went out to sow

MATTHEW 13:3



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# Celebrate

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*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.*

## 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

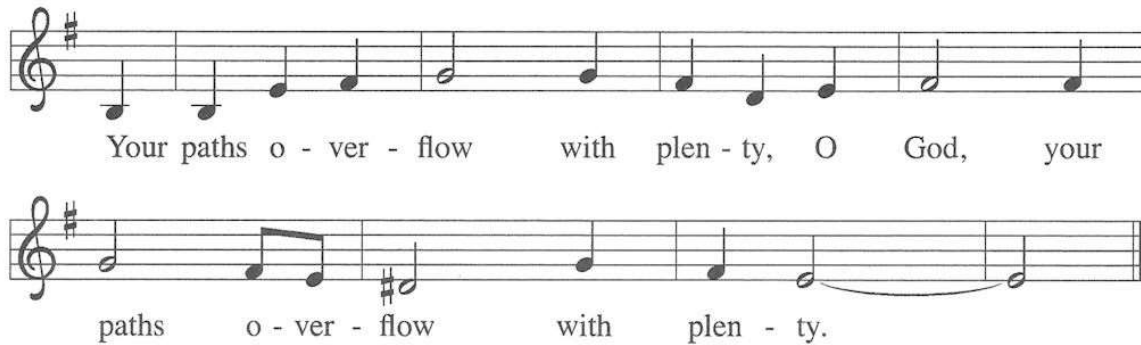
Isaiah 55:10-13

*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.*

For 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,  
<sup>11</sup>so 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.

<sup>12</sup>For 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.  
<sup>13</sup>Instead 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.





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

<sup>2</sup>**To you, the one who <sup>1</sup> answers prayer,  
to you all <sup>1</sup> flesh shall come.**

<sup>3</sup>Our sins are strong- <sup>1</sup> er than we are,  
but you blot out <sup>1</sup> our transgressions.

<sup>4</sup>**Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your <sup>1</sup> courts to dwell there!  
They will be satisfied by the beauty of your house,  
by the holiness <sup>1</sup> of your temple. R**

<sup>5</sup>Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of <sup>1</sup> our salvation,  
O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the oceans <sup>1</sup> far away.

<sup>6</sup>**You make firm the mountains <sup>1</sup> by your power;  
you are girded a- <sup>1</sup> bout with might.**

<sup>7</sup>You still the roaring <sup>1</sup> of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves, and the clamor <sup>1</sup> of the peoples.

<sup>8</sup>**Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your <sup>1</sup> marvelous signs;  
you make the dawn and the dusk to <sup>1</sup> sing for joy.] R**

<sup>9</sup>You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous;  
the river of God is <sup>1</sup> full of water.

You prepare the grain, for so you provide <sup>1</sup> for the earth.

<sup>10</sup>**You drench the furrows and smooth <sup>1</sup> out the ridges;  
with heavy rain you soften the ground and <sup>1</sup> bless its increase.**

<sup>11</sup>You crown the year <sup>1</sup> with your goodness,  
and your paths over- <sup>1</sup> flow with plenty.

<sup>12</sup>**May the fields of the wilderness be <sup>1</sup> rich for grazing,  
and the hills be <sup>1</sup> clothed with joy.**

<sup>13</sup>May the meadows cover themselves with flocks,  
and the valleys cloak them- <sup>1</sup> selves with grain;  
let them shout for <sup>1</sup> joy and sing. R

*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.*

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup>For 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, <sup>4</sup>so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For 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. <sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set

the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For 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, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But 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. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If 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.

## 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.*

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>Let anyone with ears listen!"

<sup>18</sup>"Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup>When 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. <sup>20</sup>As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup>yet 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. <sup>22</sup>As 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. <sup>23</sup>But 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."



## Prayers of Intercession

*The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.*

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

*A brief silence.*

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.**

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 (*especially*) and deepen relationships with the wider community. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Eternal God, we give thanks for all who have died (*especially Nathan Söderblom, Bishop of Uppsala, whom we commemorate today*). 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.

**Amen.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 92. **Tuesday** Ephesians 4:17—5:2. **Wednesday** Proverbs 11:23-30. **Thursday** Psalm 86:11-17. **Friday** (commemoration of Bartolomé de Las Casas, missionary to the Indies, died 1566) Hebrews 6:13-20. **Saturday** Matthew 7:15-20. **Seventh Sunday after Pentecost** Isaiah 44:6-8 *or* Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Psalm 86:11-17; Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

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