

July 10, 2005 Worship

The Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

Light Candles

Announcements:

Good morning and welcome this 8th Sunday after Pentecost.

As you may have notice there are several announcements in the bulletin. I would like to direct your attention to only a few.

The flowers this morning are given in celebration of the baptism of Kellie Anne and Deanne Kristell Jackson.

The next announcement is a good news/ bad news thing. The bad news is river rafting trip for this afternoon has been cancelled because only one family signed up. *The good news is* that all of you are then free to attend the car wash that the youth are sponsoring at Southworth's on Route 7.

Village Fair Days is rapidly approaching and will be hosting a bake sale as well as a tag sale. If you would like to contribute or help out, please call the number listed in your bulletin.

And finally, because we will be having a baptism today – the Lord's Prayer and the Passing of the Peace will follow the baptism liturgy.

With that said, let us begin our worship with a...

Responsive Call to Worship: (Psalm 119:105-112)

L: Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.

P: Teach me, O God, the way of your statutes.

L: I am severely afflicted; give me life, O God, according to your word. Accept my offerings of praise, O God, and teach me your ordinances.

P: Teach me, O God, the way of your statutes.

L: I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.

P: Teach me, O God, the way of your statutes.

L: Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

P: Amen.

Hymn This is My Father's World Page 59

Invocation (Hold of the Lord's Prayer)

Merciful Lord, God of all Creation, we pray to you because you are the author of everlasting life. To you, O God, we owe a great *debt of gratitude for all that we are and have been and hope to become*. Your abundance is too great for us to grasp or appreciate. Yet, like *pet-u-lant* children, thanksgiving does not come easily from our lips. Too often we believe that we are the product of our own talents and labor. Too frequently we believe it is by our own work that we have made ourselves what we are today. In this hour of worship, however, we pray that you might bring us to our senses. Help us take hold of the divine reality that you reveal in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As our Messiah, Jesus teaches us humility of spirit and thankfulness of heart. Make us this day your grateful children so that we might become worthy heirs of your divine promise in Jesus, our Crucified and Risen Lord. Amen, (by David N. Mosser)

First Scripture Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13 *Read by Steve Hendricks*

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, 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.

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. 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.

Baptism, the Lord's Prayer, Passing of the Peace and Gloria Patri

Call to Offering

This weekend I saw the movie "War of the Worlds" –

So I offer this call to the offering with some trepidation.

In the last days, says God,

I will pour out my spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.

Your young people shall see visions, and your old people shall dream dreams.

People of God, we have been baptized into one Spirit

And one body through Jesus Christ.

In the hope of things to come,

Let us continue our worship with the giving of our offerings.

Presentation (#47)

Prayer of Dedication

Merciful and Gracious God, of whose bounty we all have received,

Accept, we pray, this offering of your people.

Remember in your love *those who have brought it*

And those for whom it is given;

and so follow it with your blessing

that it may promote peace and goodwill among all people

and advance the realm of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn Nearer, My God, to Thee Page 677

(As is printed in your bulletin, the children may leave for church school during the second verse.)

Sermon Text: Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 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. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. 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. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 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. 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. 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.” This is the word of the Lord. Thanks *be* to God.

Anthem *Prayer* Ludwig Beethoven

Sermon *How Great Thou Art*

As you may have noticed, the sermon title is “How Great Thou Art.” Perhaps a better title (considering this morning’s gospel text would have been, “Stuff Happens” or “You win some, You lose some.”

Of all the parables this is (by far) one of my favorite. In fact, it has been referred to *by some* as - the parable of parables. It appears (with some variations) in all three gospels. In the parables we are told that again Jesus began to teach beside the sea. [What a job. I want that job. But I digress. Anyway, he was teaching beside the sea] and “such a *very large* crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.” [Sounds like one of those “*can’t a guy catch a break times*” or one of those “*Calgone take me a away-type* moments.”] Yes – and it is moments like these when we too are most likely to retreat and really *consider* the parables of life... these are the moments when we are open to the word of God.

But back to the story – meanwhile afloat on the water – Christ *prefaces* his story with the word “Listen,” meaning pay attention this is important. And he does not disappoint for truly this is an important message. Important to the Jews of the day who were under constant pressure. They faced all sorts of responses to their proclamation of the good news: persecution, indifference, hostility, closed minds, loss of place and community. ... And these words are equally important to each of us who are often distracted by the chaos of life - Distracted to the point of neglecting the word and spiritual seed that is within each of us.

Or perhaps you are tending your spirit through word and prayer, but you are too embarrassed to speak of the good news in the work place.

That would be something that those hand-waving Christians do and we don't want to be like them.

Yes, Christians today face many of the same responses when they proclaim the counter-cultural message of love, peace, justice, and acceptance of all of God's children: persecution, indifference, hostility, closed minds, loss of place and community. And yet God works great wonders in all situations, and is astonishingly extravagant in offering grace and new life in the harshest of situations and the deepest deprivations. The sower is remarkably free in throwing the seed on all sorts of potential "growth areas." There is no calculation of the seeds in his pocket. In the face of all sorts of obstacles and dangers, the sower counts on the bountiful return of a few seeds; he imagines the plentiful harvest reaped when even a few of the seeds find fertile soil. At some point we have all felt as if our efforts have fallen on barren or rocky ground. But it is important to remember that Christ is the soil that we are all planted in. By feeding and deepening our relationship with God (in Christ) we can survive even the driest of conditions and harshest of sunlight .

Before we leave this house of prayer today let us remember that we have be baptized with living water and live out a place of fertile hope – nurturing the seeds that have be planted in us and spreading the seed (that is God's love) wherever we go. Yes, let us live as Isaiah suggested when he prophesied - "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. 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 a memorial, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Amen

Response ?

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty and Ever-loving God, having sowed seeds of faith deep within us we worship you as the Master Sower. We praise you that you love us and that you have come to us in Jesus. We thank you that Christ walked the path of obience all the way to the cross and that you raised Jesus up to draw us to yourself. Jesus handed himself

over in death, knowing that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it will not bear fruit.

Teach us, like Jesus, to hand ourselves over in love for you, for one another, and for all people. As we who have been baptized into Jesus Christ enter into the life of the world, may we die with Christ that we may also rise with him. May we take part in your work of suffering and redeeming love, lifting up the oppressed, binding the brokenhearted, challenging the powerful, drawing all into community. Especially, we lift up in prayer this morning...

The family and friends of Shauna Wade – Retired Air Force officer – who died from ovarian cancer this week at the age of 42.

Lord we lift up our prayers for the world still so full of suffering, shadow by crosses of war and pain, knowing you have loved your creation from the beginning. As we celebrate the baptism of Kellie Anne and Deanne Kristell Jackson, may we join our hearts with yours in love for the world, and offer ourselves to you, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Closing Hymn Every Time I Feel the Spirit Page 592

Benediction

May the God of hope

Fill you with joy and peace in believing

So that by the power of the Holy Spirit

You may abound in hope,

Through the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

July 17, 2005 Worship
The Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

Responsive Call to Worship: (Psalm 139)

L: O God, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

P: Search me, O God, and know my heart.

L: Even before a word is on my tongue, O God, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

P: Search me, O God, and know my heart.

L: Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

P: Search me, O God, and know my heart.

L: If I say, "Surely the shadows shall cover me, and the light around me become night," even the night is not without light to you; the night is as bright as the day, for the night is as light to you.

P: Search me, O God, and know my heart.

L: Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is in me any wicked way, and lead me in the way everlasting.

P: Search me, O God, and know my heart. Amen.

Passing of the Peace and the Gloria Patri

First Hymn

They Will Know We Are Christians

Page 494

Invocation and the Lord's Prayer

The Word, O God, is what gives each of us hope and direction in life. It truly is a lamp unto our feet. Your light provides a guide for our life. Our journey is not only an outward sojourn of faith but also an interior discovery of what it means to be human as well. Give us the wisdom and discernment to learn from you the ways to be fully human as well as a genuinely faithful people. May you, O Lord, grant our prayers as you did the prayers of our ancestors - Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. Furnish us the will to grow in grace according to the precepts of the gospel. Help us find fertile soil in which to do ministry in the name of Jesus. Make Christ our morning star and grant us the good judgment necessary to follow him in the paths of righteousness. Forgive us where we have failed and open us during this time of worship to the abundant life made possible in Jesus Christ (by David N. Mosser) who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit and who taught us to pray, saying...

First Scripture Reading: Isaiah 44:6-8

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let them proclaim it, let them declare and set it forth before me.

Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be. Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one.

Call to Offering

God's Word revealed in Jesus life, death and resurrection gives us hope and direction in life. It truly is a lamp unto our feet and a guide unto our path. In response to this tremendous gift, let us open our hearts in gratitude. Let our thanks and our giving be more than obligatory acts or charitable donations. Let them be a witness to our faith and calling as Christians. Let us commit ourselves in service as we worship God with our offerings.

Presentation #47

Prayer of Dedication

We bring these gifts before you, O Lord, as a means of thanking you for the gift of your love, made known to us in Jesus Christ, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the presence and power of Christ in this church. We acknowledge Christ to be the head of our church – the one who draws us together in a spirit of worship and service. In Christ we know you – and for that we give you thanks – asking that our lives, our work, our witness as a church and our use of this offering be acceptable to you, O God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Second Hymn *This is a Day of New Beginnings* Insert

(Children are invited to adjourn to Sunday School during the 2nd verse.)

Sermon Text: Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Sermon *Hope Lies Eternal*

This is the scene – me - twenty years younger, driving around my college campus my parents' black 98 Oldsmobile (aka. the boat). I have sunglasses on, the windows are down and the radio is blaring some popular dance tune.

It isn't enough that half the campus can hear the music, when the next song pulses across the airwaves, I holler to my friend riding next to me "Ohhh... this is one of my favorites." and I reached for the volume knob and turn up the radio.

Her response being, "Leslie, you say that about every song."

As I stand before you this morning, I am reminded that last week I told you that the story of the sower was one of my parables, but I must admit the story of the wheat and the tares is my absolute favorite.

But I promise not to turn the volume up too high.

The story of the wheat and the tares appeals to the gardener in me that strives to create a weed-free garden. I must say that it is equally as appealing to the Christian (in me) who endeavors to live a sin-free life.

But life isn't that way, is it? Somewhere along the way, someone planted weeds deep within the soil of our being and our world.

I also like this passage because the actions represented in the story are so typical of human behavior. We – like the slaves – often assume that it is God (the Master Farmer) who has sown the bad seed. Perhaps he skimped on the seed this year. We dare to ask, "Master, did you not sow good seed in the field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" Or perhaps in our time the question might be, "Why, then, are you making my life so complicated?"

Yes - We are (forever) wanting to place blame rather than accept life as it is. I see it all the time in hospitals. You will hear family members of a cancer patient say well he smoked for years..." or the family of an AIDS patient say, Well she just couldn't give up the drugs."

We don't want to wait until "the harvest" to see the judgment of the Almighty. Rather, *we chose to blame the Almighty for our lot in life – or* just as damning, we want to blame victims for their life circumstances rather accepting weeds as part of farming.

What if, *stuff happens?*

Can we still work for this Master Farmer?

If we were to attempt to discern the will of God by exogeking the parable we would find that the precise use of the word "ziz-ania," which refers to a wheat-like weed, is unclear. *As is the case* with the use of the word for "sleep." Elsewhere in the New Testament it is used as a metaphor for spiritual sloth or neglect. However, here it appears to mean "at night." But what does this all mean – *to us – here – and now?*

(For those who are comfortable with it – I am going to ask you to close your eyes and allow these questions to wash over you. If closing your eyes does not appeal to you, maybe you could pick something to focus on while you consider the following.)

Perhaps we are being invited to live with that exact question, "What does this all mean to us right here, right now?" Or maybe truth can be found in questions such as these.

Who does the world tell you that you are?

What does "the flesh" lead us toward, and what does it lead us away from?

What do we owe God?

How does "the spirit of adoption" re-define us as children of God?

What does it mean to be an “heir” of God?

When have you instinctively cried out to God as a caregiver who is to be trusted, *a caregiver to whom you can turn*, a caregiver who hears and responds and provides?

How firmly rooted *in your spirit* is the knowledge that **you** are a child of God who can indeed cry out to God as your loving, nurturing provider?

How firmly rooted in your spirit is the knowledge that God will be with you until the end???

How do we live in the present if we are awaiting a future benefit? For it has been said, “Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!” Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

(Walk down front) This morning’s pastoral prayer is really a *prayer of the people* – that is your prayer – I will offer it as a litany, closing each prayer segment with “God of love” – and I invite you to respond “Hear our prayer.” You should also know that there will be a time of silence in which you are invited to lift up the names of people who are heart.

That having been said - Gathered, enlightened, and empowered to serve, let us pray for the church, the nations and all people seeking God’s mercy and care.

God of the harvest, we pray that you grant us strength to withstand the challenges of this world. Plant our feet firmly so that we might endure the hardships of life, yet also us to be flexibly enough that we might adapt to changing seasons. God of love...

Help us make thought-filled choices and prevent us oh Lord, from demonizing others when we disagree with them personally, politically, socially, or theologically. Teach us to work together for the common good. God of love...

Keep us diligent in combating social ills in our community and beyond. Strengthen our voices on behalf of children and all those who suffer injustice and neglect. God of love...

Empower physicians, nurses, and all people in the field of health care to become agents of your consolation and healing. Especially we ask that your protection, consolation and healing presence be with...

for those impact by war and oppression,

for our family and friends who may be traveling

- especially - Mike and his family,

for Betsy and Sally during their respective recovers,

for the family and friends of Shauna Wade,

for Irma Vuille at the death of her son,

for Mary Daniels at the death of a brother and niece. God of love...

We rejoice in the witness of all the faithfully departed and ask that you bind our hearts together with theirs in the communion of saints. God of love...

Receive our prayers, Faithful One, and give us all we need for this day and the days to come, through the power of your most Holy Spirit - and in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Final Hymn *Stand Up* Page 613

Benediction

May Christ so dwell within you
that you may go forth
with the light of hope in your eyes,
the fire of inspiration on your lips,
the word of God on your tongues
and the love of God in your hearts,
now and forever more. Amen.