

July 12 Worship
Reader- Carl Flinkstrom

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“Then he took of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil; he placed it beside abundant waters. He set it like a willow twig.”*
Ezekiel 17:5

Opening Scripture- Psalm 119:105-112(page 534)

Opening Chorus- 300- Breathe On Me Breath Of God

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: The Word of God is planted in our hearts.

People: May our hearts be receptive to the Word.

Leader: The Love of God rains down on us.

People: May our souls soak in the wonder of God’s love.

Leader: The Breathe of God blows softly within us.

People: May our minds be stirred by the power of God’s spirit.

Hymn of Praise- 61- All Creatures Of Our God And King

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- O God, We gather together in Your presence with expectation, hungry for an encounter with You, eager to hear Your Word. Open our eyes and ears to the presence of Your Holy Spirit. May the seeds of Your Word scattered among us this morning fall on fertile soil. May they take root in our hearts and lives, and produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying...*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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.
Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Isaiah 55:10-13(page 635-636)

Special Music- *“The Impossible Dream”* Carl Flinkstrom

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 13:1-9(page 846-847)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 601- Standing On The Promises

New Testament Scripture- Romans 8:1-11(page 982-983)

Message

“Planting On Fertile Ground”

I think it is safe to say that most everyone here understands how to plant a garden using seeds. This is one of the things that comes from living in the country. When Jesus told the parable of the sower, He was speaking in a way that every person there understood. The people of that time were all attached to the land and knew how to plant and harvest food. Even though most of what Jesus said about planting seeds was common knowledge, there were those who had not learned the difference between fertile soil and infertile soil. Just because something is considered to be common knowledge does not mean that everybody does it right. There are always those who disregard what should be common sense and try to do it their way.

Jesus used this parable to explain to his followers and the disciples how there are different responses to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. The sower in the parable is Jesus, and the seed is the word of God (both Jesus's spoken word and today the Bible). The hard ground represents someone with a hardened heart full of sin who hears the word of God but does not accept it. Satan can keep this person from growing at all. The stony ground is someone who shows interest and awareness in the Gospel, yet his heart isn't fully convinced when trouble comes to his faith, which is not strong enough to stand. The thorny ground is a person who receives the Gospel but who has many other idols and distractions in life - worries, riches, and lusts, which take over his mind and heart, and he cannot grow in the truth of God's Word. The good soil is someone who has heard and received the Word of God and allows it to take root and grow within his life. This person represents true salvation that bears good fruit. Jesus spoke the Parable of the Sower to teach how important the state of our heart is to receive the Gospel and how our choices and actions prove our salvation after hearing the Gospel.

We all have heard this parable many times and perhaps it is just old news, but

sometimes we need to hear things over and over again so that we can truly understand the message contained within the story. Yes, we get it, the seed only grows if it is planted in the best of soils, but are we supposed to be the sower, the seed or the ground? Actually, we must be all three at different times. We cannot be the sower until we understand the properties of the seed and of the soil. We can't be the seed until we are properly scattered or sown by someone who has knowledge of the method of planting and we certainly cannot be the soil until we are softened and carefully ready to receive the seed and are able to germinate it.

Now, we understand that Jesus is not literally teaching about how to plant a garden. He is attempting to tell His disciples how to spread the Word of God, the gospel, throughout the world. Every disciple was meant to go out into the world and preach the Word to all who would hear it so that all people would have access to God's message. They were to sow the seed, spread the Word, on fertile ground so that it would grow and spread. Before they could sow, they had to learn what it was they were sowing. How could they spread the Word, sow the seed, until they knew what they were talking about.

There are very specific rule, in Jewish scripture, regarding the seeds that were to be grown. If you were planting wheat, for instance, the seed had to be as pure as possible. It needed to have been harvested from the best of last seasons crop and could not contain any seeds from other plants. They could not dilute the seed with some inferior crop. Growing seed to be planted in future years was a specialty. Someone who grew grain for milling did not grow seed for planting. It is the same way today. There are farms who only grow crops for the seeds not for the crop itself.

In order for a disciple to preach the Word of God, they must take the time to learn the Word of God. Not everyone is able to preach the Word. There are those who do a better job of living the Word than preaching it. That's OK, they are needed too. And then, if there are those who preach, there must be those who are there to listen. Of those who are there to listen, there must be some who will take the Word and use it, the fertile ground as well as those who may be ambivalent, the poorer soil, and those who totally disregard the Word, the hard soil that will not allow the seed to grow.

Which one do you want to be, or better yet, which one are you? We can each be one or more of them. We can be the one who sows the seed. This requires that we study and learn the Word of God so well that we sow the seed in a manner that pleases God and does not misinterpret the Word or dilute the Word with our own ideals that may not be quite what the Word says. We can be like the seeds that fell on the path, or road, where the seeds were promptly eaten by the birds since there was no way for the seeds to grow. Perhaps we can be like the rocky soil where there

was just barely enough soil for the seeds to root into and they failed to grow. We hear the Word and it makes sense, but we cannot quite bring ourselves to truly accept the ideas. Maybe we are given the Word but we are living among people who we don't want to know that we are hearing the Word. We don't want the criticism that comes with being a Christian. This is akin to the seeds that fell among the thorns and weeds.

The ideal is to be the fertile soil where we are open to hear and listen to the Word, willing to accept and study and pray for understanding so that we, in turn, may become people who can sow the seed, preach the Word of God or live the Word of God so that the message of the gospel can be spread as Jesus instructed His disciple to do. It is our choice and we all have the free will to choose but which would you feel better doing? Not everyone is required to be a sower, but we all must choose if we are willing to be the ones who will tend the seed, the Word of God, and see that it has room to grow. How about we all tend to our gardens? Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- The Divine Gardener cannot sow seeds of justice and peace where there is nothing but hearts of dry, hard rocks. We confess that our hearts may need tilling and the digging out of the deeply rooted sins that crowd out seedlings planted with divine compassion. God of steadfast love, you change bitter tears of remorseful hearts with raindrops of mercy, Now let us germinate a new life, growing with integrity! God of steadfast love, you change the cold shame of contrite hearts with sun rays of mercy Now let us sprout a new life, growing with honesty! God of steadfast love, you change the stony edges of repentant hearts into landscapes of mercy, Now let us branch out into new life, growing with generosity! Divine Gardener, You tend us in steadfast love, Unending mercies, and eternal faithfulness; you cultivate true friendship with you through boundless forgiveness. In Christ, this faithful love is planted in our hearts. Gathered as your community of believers, our family of faith, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us, we can now produce forgiveness for each other as we are forgiven. Thanks be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 524- It Is Well With My Soul

Benediction- As you go from here, remember this: the same Spirit of God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, also lives in you, breathing new life and freedom into your hearts and minds. So go from here with joy and confidence, knowing that God Is at work within you. Go in peace. Amen.