

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—PROPER 10

July 12, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.

PRELUDE "Beautiful Savior"

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

People: who made heaven and earth.

Pastor: If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

People: But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

Pastor: Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

People: Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. Blessed Lord, since You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

FIRST READING *Isaiah 55:10–13*

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water 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 shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, 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 make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE *Romans 8:12–17*

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness

with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL *Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the thirteenth chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, 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 produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear. . . .” “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 has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along 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 he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he 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 deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON “If you plant it, it will grow” Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23

- I. Are you an optimist, or a pessimist?
 - “If you plant it, it will grow”
- II. The Promise: Plant it, and it will grow (Isaiah 55:10-13)
 - What actions or things does God’s all-powerful Word do?
- III. The Parable (Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23)
 - A. Seed on the path
 - These people hear the Word, but they don’t _____ to the Word.
 - B. Seed on rocky ground
 - These people hear and listen to the Word, but only for _____
 - C. Seed among the thorns

- These people hear and listen to the Word, but imagine that God doesn't want their undivided _____ and _____.
- Is the sower "successful"?

IV. The Promise of Planting (Matthew 13:8 and 13:23)

- What does the Word give us?
- Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"
- Matthew 25:35-38; 40 "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me....as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me"
- Will we always see the harvest?

Are you an optimist, or are you a pessimist? Are you a glass half-empty person, or are you a glass half-full person? Do you complain that rose bushes have thorns, or do you rejoice because thorns have roses? Do you see the storm clouds, or do you see the silver lining? There are various activities and things in life that can show us whether we are optimistic, or pessimistic. There are many things that can pull this trait out. Perhaps, the thing that does this best is gardening.

The pessimist says, "Why plant anything if nothing results because birds, bunnies, insects, deer, weeds, creeping charlie, blight, hail, or bad weather can ruin and kill what I'm trying to grow?! What is the point? Why take the risk and waste the time?"

The optimist, despite potential failure, plants. Why? Hope. A good farmer, or an avid gardener, lives in the confident hope of a rewarding harvest. Not every seed will produce, but enough will make it worth all the while. That is the parable of the Sower.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus compares sharing God's Word to planting a field. He uses worldly realism that alert us to the potential failures, but He still calls us to faith and to action. He promises and teaches, that "If you plant it, it will grow." Our goal is to grow in faith that produces the fruit of the Spirit, including the desire to be planters of the seed of God's Word.

In our Old Testament reading, we see the foundation and confidence for such a promise, "if you plant it, it will grow." God starts by using a simile to introduce His promise. He says, **"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,"**. Before the rain and snow are taken back up into the sky (as mist), they achieve the purpose for which they are sent. God then makes His point and gives His promise. **"...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 shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."** God's Word will do the same! It accomplishes and will accomplish that which God sends it out for!

It is an all-powerful word that He sends! His Word spoke creation into existence. "Let there be...and there was...." This powerful word can kill and make alive, it strengthens, sustains, pardons, justifies, enlightens, and guides. In Matthew, Jesus' word brings people to faith, forgives sins, heals diseases, casts out demons, calms a storm, multiplies bread and fish, and calms anxious hearts. It is a word that does what it says! This is no ordinary Word! This all-powerful Word *will* accomplish what it is sent out to do. Plant the Word, and it will grow! To teach this point, Jesus gives us the Parable of the Sower.

Jesus says the Sower goes out to sow, and he throws seeds everywhere! Some seed fell alongside the path. The birds then came, and they picked and pecked that path clean. Not a seed remained. Jesus says that these people hear the Word, but they don't listen to the Word. Jesus says the devil, the evil one, snatches away that seed, that word. "Snatch" evokes a powerful image. It is an overpowering, a wrestling away, a show of force. It is a ripping out of someone's hands. It is a disregard for someone else. I think of an older brother ripping something out of the hand of a little brother. It is never a pleasant experience to have something snatched from you. Sad to say, there are many things in our modern culture that provide open ground for the

devil, our sinful flesh, and our evil world, to rob people of the Gospel before it ever takes root. It gets snatched from them, and with deadly consequence. But, the sower continues on. He still spreads that seed.

Jesus says some seed fell on rocky ground. Believe it or not, soil can be quite rocky. Growing up, my Grandpa Daryl's family had one of the last pieces of farmland in the Chicagoland area. On occasion, we would have family gatherings there, and have family hayrides with his tractor and wagon. One of the things that my cousins, my brother, and I would do during them was to play a game. While the wagon was moving, we would scoot off it, run to the field, and try to grab a rock, or as many as we could, and then run back to the wagon and hop on. We would see who could collect the most. It was always funny when my Grandpa would accelerate when he saw us running back. Some seed fell on rocky ground, where there wasn't much soil. The seed quickly sprouted, but since there wasn't much depth, it withered away once the sun hit it.

Jesus says these people hear and listen to the Word, but only for a while. Their faith blossoms quickly, but then just as fast wilts and withers, often when under pressure. When my sister was in and out of the hospital, I remember my Dad making the comment, "You see a lot of people searching and calling out for Jesus, here." He was right. You would see many people praying or talking about faith. But, I often wondered, how many people continued to do so once they left! Once the crisis passes, faith can disappear. Once the need is gone, they have no need for Jesus. The seed withers away. But, despite this, the sower continues on.

Jesus says some seed fell among thorns. To the sower, this seemed like good ground. The perennial thorn roots weren't visible. Initially, it looked promising. But, once the seed sprouted up, the thorns grew first, and they choked the seed, limiting it, and killing it. It was unfruitful. Jesus says these people hear and listen to the Word, but imagine that God doesn't need their undivided attention and devotion. Jesus presents the challenge of faith in good times. Notice the word He uses: "choke." It is a brutal and violent word. Being choked is a slow process, where you lose all power, life, awareness, and ability to resist. It is where you tense and shrivel up. Jesus doesn't mince words. What is it that chokes? The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. Jesus says these things can slowly choke and kill that seed, kill that Word. This is the context we find ourselves in. This is the soil of America!

With the lack of success so far, it is enough to make this optimistic sower a pessimistic one! It is enough to make anyone go home, throw the bag of seeds, and say, "What is the use? It seems pointless! Nothing is working!" But, hold on. The harvest is to be expected. All is not lost. This Word does that for which it is sent. Plant the Word, and it will grow. God promises!

The harvest is to be expected! Be the optimistic gardener! Some seed fell on good ground, and it produced an extravagant harvest! It produces 100x, 60x, 30x, what was sown. The sower's work wasn't in vain. Jesus says these are those who keep on hearing and listening to the Word. They grow in their faith and sanctification. The Gospel always bears fruit. It will always make a harvest.

This Word makes a harvest in us. God's Word doesn't come back empty or void; it does what it is sent to do. This word delivers Jesus. It gives all that He has and is: His righteousness, His works, and His merits. It gives us all that Jesus gives and does: His grace, forgiveness, life, and salvation, won at the cross, confirmed at the Tomb. Jesus comes in that Word through baptism and His Supper. Jesus comes in that Word that is spoken and read. This Word, this Gospel message, *always* produces a harvest. It *always* bears fruit.

What does this look like? Paul gives us this picture in Galatians. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."** The Holy Spirit produces this fruit, this harvest in us through the Word. He also produces another fruit, too, good works.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells the sheep, the elect, some of their good works. He says, **"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me....as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."** Talk about a harvest! God produces a harvest in us, through His Word, by the Spirit. Plant the Word, and it will grow. This promise and reality encourages, emboldens, and empowers us! It encourages us to be sowers, so others can enjoy the same harvest, too.

English writer Herbert Leslie Gee tells this story. At the church where Gee attended, there was an old man named Thomas. Thomas had outlived most of his family and friends, and no one at the church really knew him. He hardly said a word to anyone, but Gee knew him. When Thomas died, Gee had the feeling that there would be no one to go to his funeral besides the pastor doing it, and he was right. On the day of the funeral, it

was quite stormy, and no one showed. When Gee and the pastor reached the cemetery, there was a soldier standing at the gate. The soldier quietly followed them as they brought the casket to the open grave. Once the graveside service was over, the soldier gave a salute to old Thomas, and walked away. As the soldier left, Gee approached him. The soldier said to him, "You're probably wondering what I'm doing here. Years ago, Thomas was my Sunday School teacher. I was a wild boy, and a trial to him. I was an absolute terror. He never knew the impact he had on me, but I owe everything that I am or will be to old Thomas. I came to show him my respect." Sometimes, we might not see the harvest this side of heaven. We might be that soldier in the life of another, or we might be Thomas! We might fear that word or witness to a spouse, child, friend, co-worker, or neighbor falls on deaf ears, or goes unnoticed. We might just see the weeds, thorns, and birds disrupt the work where we sow. But, remember the promise: plant the Word, and it will grow. Sow the seed, and leave the rest to God. His Word will not come back empty or void, He promises. I think that promise is enough to make anyone an optimistic gardener. Take heart, the harvest is coming.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

MUSIC DURING PREPARATION "Bells of Norwich"

PREFACE

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, for the countless blessings You so freely bestow on us and all creation. Above all, we give thanks for Your boundless love shown to us when You sent Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into our flesh and laid on Him our sin, giving Him into death that we might not die eternally. Because He is now risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, all who believe in Him will overcome sin and death and will rise again to new life. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth adored;

Heav'n and earth with full acclaim shout the glory of Your name.

Sing hosanna in the highest, sing hosanna to the Lord;

Truly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Pastor: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Your righteous judgment You condemned the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit, and You justly barred them and all their children from the tree of life. Yet, in Your great mercy, You promised salvation by a second Adam, Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and made His cross a life-giving tree for all who trust in Him.

We give You thanks for the redemption You have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may faithfully eat and drink of the fruits of His cross and receive the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that come to us in His body and blood.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

LORD'S PRAYER

People: 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.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My T body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My T blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

PAX DOMINI

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: Amen.

DISTRIBUTION

You are invited to receive the Lord's Supper if you believe and confess that Jesus Christ is your Savior from sin, you are a baptized child of the Triune God, and you believe that He gives you His body and blood in the bread and wine you receive. White grape juice can be found in the center of each tray for those who cannot receive alcohol. Children are welcome to come forward for a blessing.

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

Pastor: Let us pray. We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

BENEDICAMUS

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

People: Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

POSTLUDE "Almighty God Your Word Is Cast" LSB 577

- 1 Almighty God, Your Word is cast
Like seed into the ground;
Now let the dew of heav'n descend
And righteous fruits abound.

- 2 Let not the sly satanic foe
This holy seed remove,
But give it root in ev'ry heart
To bring forth fruits of love.
- 3 Let not the world's deceitful cares
The rising plant destroy,
But let it yield a hundredfold
The fruits of peace and joy.
- 4 So when the precious seed is sown,
Life-giving grace bestow
That all whose souls the truth receive
Its saving pow'r may know. Text: Public domain

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