

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—PROPER 12

July 26, 2020 – 9:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

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: Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love, that, receiving what You have promised, we may love what You have commanded; 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 *Deuteronomy 7:6–9*

“You are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.”

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE *Romans 8:28–39*

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—

who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL *Matthew 13:44–52*

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

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

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 Matthew 13:44-46 "The Kingdom of God is like..."

- The Kingdom of God comes by _____, to those _____ and to those not _____.
- The Kingdom of God changes how we see and interact with everything
 - Mt 6:19-20 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven...."
 - Mt 6:31-34 "Therefore do not be anxious, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."
 - Mt. 10:39 "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
 - How does the Kingdom of God change your view of life?

- The Kingdom of God shows us life in His _____.

At a conference a few years ago, I remember then District President Dean Nadasdy telling this experience that he had at a church. He was baffled by it. He once went to a church where the pastor would keep reusing his illustrations and stories on a regular basis. He would say them word for word, and they would have the same point, each and every time. People in the pews quickly caught onto this, and so they kept track of the stories, and assigned them a number. When the pastor would come in on Sunday mornings, people would ask him, “You going to use story 5 again, or will you change it up and use story 13?” President Nadasdy said they would even make wagers to which stories he might use. They even gave him a story number sheet! What a strange experience!

For the last few weeks, Jesus has done something similar. He has been teaching about the Kingdom of God, but He has been using the exact same imagery: a man sowing some seed in a field. He even used it back to back! Today, He will change it up. We have four small parables that teach us about the Kingdom of God, which is God’s rule and reign in the life of a believer. For our sermon, we’ll focus on the first two: how the Kingdom of God is like a hidden treasure or great pearl. In these two little parables, we will see how the Kingdom of God comes, how it changes our lives, and how it teaches us to live in grace.

In the first parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. A man is walking through that field, minding his own business, when he unexpectedly finds this buried treasure. In the second parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a great pearl. A merchant who is looking for fine pearls is searching high and low for one of great value. Eventually, he finds it! In of them, a man stumbles across something of great value. In the other, the man searching finds what he is looking for. Believe it or not, that is how the Kingdom of God. For both men, the one searching and the one not searching, the Kingdom of God comes. It happens to them. Remember, it is the rule and reign of God in the heart of a believer. They discover it whether they were seeking it or not.

In Jesus’ ministry, the Kingdom of God came to those who were looking for it (through Him). People like Simeon, Anna, Nicodemus, the rich young ruler, the Wisemen, and John the Baptist were searching for this Kingdom, and Jesus comes, and brings it. In His ministry, Jesus also comes to those who were not looking for it all like the man walking in the field. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishing on a lake when this Kingdom came in Christ. Matthew was at work at the Tax Booth when Jesus walked past and said, “Follow Me.” Small children were brought to Jesus for His blessing, and the Samaritan woman got more than a drink of water at the well when she met Jesus on that fateful day. To those who weren’t searching for the Kingdom of God, Jesus comes.

Whether searching or not, God’s Kingdom comes by grace. It is a gift! It is not earned or deserved. It is not a reward for doing good or trying hard. As Luther says in the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer: it “comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.” And it does! The Kingdom of God comes by grace, and it is by grace that we inherit it. We inherit the kingdom by grace through faith in Christ, who purchased and redeemed us with His precious blood. He won our place!

God’s Kingdom still comes today, it comes to those seeking and not seeking. An infant being baptized is not seeking the Kingdom of Heaven (they don’t even know their name, what they want; they cannot walk or talk!), but they are brought to it, and given Christ’s gifts of life, salvation, and faith. Many of us entered God’s Kingdom this way. An adult convert may have struggled for years to trying to find a meaning in life before encountering Jesus. An adult might have grown up in the faith, wandered away, and came back after “life” happened. It comes to those seeking and not seeking. God’s Kingdom comes by grace, and we enter it through grace. What else do we see in these parables about the Kingdom of God? Let’s go back to the text.

When the man walking in the field finds the treasure, he covers it up. In his joy and excitement of finding the treasure, he goes home, sells all that he has, and buys that field for the treasure. When the merchant finds the great pearl he was looking for, he goes and sells all that he has, he sells all the other pearls, and buys it! When both men find the treasure or pearl, it changes how they see things. They sell and give up all that they have for it. Nothing can compare with what they have found. They see things differently in light of the treasure.

In His ministry, Jesus taught His disciples to see their lives differently in light of the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 6:19-20, Jesus shifts their focus from this world to the next; He gives them a long term perspective.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven....” They are to focus on what will last.

Just a few verses later, in 6:31-34, Jesus addresses their worldly concerns and worries, and shifts their priorities. **“Therefore do not be anxious, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”** Notice Jesus didn’t dismiss those needs or worries, or say they aren’t important. He affirms the need for them, but calls them to reevaluate those worries in light of the Kingdom of God. He will provide; let Him worry how.

And then, in Matthew 10:39, He gives them this life saving paradox: **“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”** The call to discipleship involves losing one’s life for the sake of Jesus, but we see a paradox at work. To lose your life for Jesus would actually be to gain it. Jesus teaches His disciples to see their lives, person, priorities, and perspective differently in light of His Kingdom. It is a radical shift and change compared to the world around them. The Kingdom of God changes everything!

As God’s people, we have a different view of life, one that is starkly different than the world around us, because of this Kingdom. We know that life is more than food, drink, job, possessions, and experiences. Our lives are a walk and relationship with God in His grace, as we head toward our heavenly home. We know that we don’t just live for ourselves and desires. Our lives are lives lived not for ourselves, but for others in our vocations as child, parent, grandparent, friend, neighbor, and employee. We serve the people around us in them, and we serve God by serving them! We see ourselves differently in light of God’s Kingdom. We are not defined by success, status, stuff, home, health, achievements, assets, you name it! We are defined by our identity as God’s loved and forgiven children because of Christ’s death and resurrection for me. This is where we have our identity and grounding in life. And this identity changes how we see others. We see others as valuable and precious, since Christ died and rose for them! That itself gives dignity, respect, and value. The Kingdom of God changes every aspect of our lives, from priorities, perspectives, and plans to ourselves and others! There is nothing this doesn’t affect!

Let’s go back to the text and see what is left in the parables. When we look at the parables, we see that Jesus leaves us with an open-ended story and paradoxical situation. What will these people do? How will they live? Did you think about that? They actually gave everything up. They sold all that they had to possess the treasure, and yet now they will need to rely on the treasure for the necessities of life. In other words, those who possess the Kingdom are actually possessed by it.

The reign and rule of Jesus is a present experience at work in our lives. In daily repentance, we come before Jesus to receive forgiveness of sins, and in daily delight, we walk in His grace. It is a life lived in grace. It is a grace that gives us forgiveness, salvation, and life, won at the cross, and confirmed at the tomb. It is a grace that brings me the Kingdom through His Spirit, by His Word. It is a grace found in His Super, Word, and baptism, and given through those things in an overwhelming abundance. It is a grace that reassures and proclaims that God loves and cares for me, in spite of my inadequacies, failures, mistakes, and bad days. It is a grace that transforms my life, and one that opens my eyes to see all that God gives me to support my body and life, my friends and my family.

Illustrations and stories can be a helpful thing for learning, even when they can be repetitive and reused. Jesus uses a hidden treasure and pearl to teach us that the Kingdom of God comes by grace, that this Kingdom helps us to see life differently, and shows us how to live in His grace. What an image! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

MUSIC DURING PREPARATION

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 "Be Still, My Soul" LSB 752

1 Be still, my soul; the Lord is on your side;

Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;

Leave to your God to order and provide;

In ev'ry change He faithful will remain.

Be still, my soul; your best, your heav'nly Friend

Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

2 Be still, my soul; your God will undertake

To guide the future as He has the past.

Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;

All now mysterious shall be bright at last.

Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know

His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

3 Be still, my soul; though dearest friends depart

And all is darkened in this vale of tears;

Then you will better know His love, His heart,

Who comes to soothe your sorrows and your

fears.

Be still, my soul; your Jesus can repay

From His own fullness all He takes away.

4 Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on

When we shall be forever with the Lord,

When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,

Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.

Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,

All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

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Acknowledgments

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

GENEROSITY THOUGHTS: *Matthew 13:45-46 – “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”* Indeed, Jesus redeemed us and purchased us back from sin and death with all that He had. We belong to Him now. And this is the foundation for our own generosity: imitating the out-sized generosity of Jesus.

A NOTE OF THANKS FROM THE FEDERWITZ FAMILY: Dear members of Emmaus, I'm writing to thank you for your support of our ministry over these last several years. We very much appreciate it! Your faithful prayers and financial partnership has been a huge encouragement to us. Thank you! Love in Christ, Carrie Federwitz

LWR MASK SEWING PROJECT: The Social Ministries and Fellowship Committees are sponsoring a mask sewing project as part of the Lutheran World Relief 75,000 More! Face Mask Challenge which will deliver masks with International Personal Health Kits. Due to COVID-19 we are not able to get together to work on this project, however, we would like to encourage any home sewers to help. We are currently applying for a Thrivent Action Grant to help pay for materials and we will put together kits that will be available in August. Please watch the bulletin for more information. If you are interested in helping you can contact Marilyn Pierce: pierc019@umn.edu or Marie Garcia: elmaG98@aol.com .

HEAR “THE LUTHERAN HOUR” on Sunday mornings at 6:05 a.m. on WCCO 830 AM radio. Next week's broadcast: “Christ's Resurrection Makes Everything New” Guest Speaker: Dr. Oswald Hoffmann. There is power in doing good works for the sake of others, but that kind of civic righteousness can't compare with the perfect righteousness of God which covers us through faith in Jesus Christ. In a classic radio message, Dr. Oswald Hoffmann shares the power of Christ's resurrection that overcomes death. It's “Archives August.”

FACE COVERINGS REQUIRED

On July 22, 2020, Governor Tim Walz issued Emergency Executive Order 20-81 that requires Minnesotans to wear a face covering in certain settings to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. One of the settings included in the recent order is churches.

In light of that, effectively immediately, starting July 26, 2020, worshippers will be required to wear a face covering when entering and exiting the building, and throughout the service. Those who are exempt from this are those who are under five years old, and those with health issues (of any kind, both physical and mental health related) that would be exacerbated by wearing a face covering. These exemptions and requirements are in accordance with the Executive Order.

While I understand and know that wearing face coverings are not always pleasant or desirable during the worship service, I ask you to join us in this, as we honor the Governor and his order, which is done for our good, and for the health and well-being of our neighbor.

We thank you for your understanding and patience with this new mandate as God guides us through this challenging time, sustaining us by His wonderful grace. God is faithful, and He will get us through this.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Nick Kooi