

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
318 4th STREET, BOX 385, GAYLORD, MN, 55334
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
July 12, 2020

PRELUDE

Stacy Pauly

WELCOME

THE CALL

Your word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path. Your word is our heritage forever, the joy of our hearts.

GATHERING HYMN

"HOLY GOD, WE PRAISE YOUR NAME"

#276 (NCH)

- 1 Holy God, we praise your name; Sovereign God, we bow before you; all on earth your scepter claim, all the heavenly hosts adore you. Infinite your vast domain, everlasting is your reign.
- 2 Hark, the glad celestial hymn angel choirs above are raising; Cherubim and seraphim in unceasing chorus praising, fill the heavens with joy aflame: "Holy, holy, is your name."
- 3 All the apostles join the strain as your sacred name they hallow; prophets swell the glad refrain, and the blessed martyrs follow; and from morn to set of sun, through the church the song goes on.
- 4 Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, three we name you; while in essence only One, undivided God we claim you, and adoring bend the knee, while we sing this mystery.

INVOCATION

Loving God, we welcome your living presence in our midst.
Share our joy and our thanks for the life you give us.
Dance among us! Pray with us! Shower us with your love! Amen!

CALL TO CONFESSION

Gracious God, we praise you for your gifts to us: our lives, this world, and your word to us. When we receive your word, may we nurture it so that it grows roots within us. May we not be distracted by the lure of wealth or the cares of the world. Let us be good soil, receiving your word, understanding it, and acting upon it. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

We claim what the apostle Paul teaches: the Spirit of God dwells in you. You are forgiven and free. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Author of Life, Living Word, Holy Breath, we have stumbled through the week and groped our way back to this place. Illumine the steps before us and write your word on our hearts, for we carry the name of Jesus and would walk in the light of his love. Amen

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

God of life, by the power of your Spirit, come to us now. Plow our hearts with your living Word until we who are broken become fertile with your love, for we long to bear fruit in a world that is wasting. We pray in the name of Jesus, whose charge we bear. Amen.

HOMILY

"The Hundredfold Harvest"

Dr. John McKay

Today, I would like to bring you a message of HOPE.

And yet, I would like to remain faithful to the lectionary, and today's Gospel reading is the parable of the Sower and the Seed. Within this parable, there is a powerful message of hope. So, I'll go through this parable, but will put special emphasis on the strong message of hope at the end.

(READ MATTHEW 13: 1-9) I'm going to stop there. That's where Jesus stopped. How many of you understand this parable? Do you know who the sower represents? What about the seed? How about the four types of soil? Do you all understand this so far?

If you said "yes" to my questions, I say "Congratulations! You really know your scriptures!"
If you said, "No" I don't get it; I don't understand", I say, "Well, you are in very good company, because neither the crowds nor even the disciples understood it, either."

The parable of the Sower and the Seed is one of only SIX parables to occur in ALL THREE synoptic Gospels, that is, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. And all three accounts include the passage that follows, about the reason why Jesus spoke in parables – to fulfill a prophecy of Isaiah's – and the next portion, the explanation of the parable.

Now, this tells us a couple of things that I think are important to remember when we read the Gospels: first, the reason why Jesus spoke in parables, and secondly, this parable must have been considered very important for all THREE sections (the parable, the bit about Isaiah, and the explanation of the parable) to be included in the three synoptic Gospels.

OK. Here's the explanation: (READ MATTHEW 13: 12-23)

So, who is the sower? Well, Jesus' own explanation is open enough that the sower could be God, or even you and I.

Now, if WE are the sower, how do we go about sowing the Word of God? I love the wonderful quotation attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel at all times, and, when necessary, use words."

In other words, let our lives set examples for people. The choices we make and our actions really do speak louder than words.

Do we belong to a Church? Are we known as Christians? What charities do we support?
Do we try to see the good in all things? Are we positive people?

(Matthew 6:33, from The Sermon on the Mount): "But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

(Ephesians 5:20): "Give thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The second symbol, the seed, is clearly the Word of God.

The third symbol, the soil, can also represent you and me, just as the sower can.

If we are the soil, which kind are we? Are we the soil on the path, which gets trodden down?
Are we rocky soil without depth? Are we thorny soil that chokes out the Word of God? Or, are we the good soil that "brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty"?

Regarding the soil and the crops it produces, one of my sources explained what this would mean to a farmer in 1st century Palestine:

"Even if the harvest were only thirtyfold, this story would end with a miracle. Sevenfold meant a good year for the farmer, and tenfold would mean true abundance. Thirtyfold would feed a village for a year, and a hundredfold would let the farmer retire to a villa by the Sea of Galilee."

This is the HOPE that I want to bring you today. This parable does not end with a list of inhospitable soils. It ends with a miracle – a harvest of one hundredfold!

This parable challenges us to believe in God's abundance.

You've all heard about the glass of water that was half-full – or was it half-empty?

The God we serve has told us to expect the best, and that there is enough for everybody.

Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) Amen.

HYMN

"AMIGHTY GOD, YOUR WORD IS CAST"

#318 (NCH)

- 1 Almighty God, your Word is cast like seed into the ground; now let the dew of heaven descend, and righteous fruits abound.
- 2 Let not the sly satanic foe this holy seed remove, but give it root in every 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, your quickening grace bestow, that all whose souls the truth receive, its saving power may know.

OFFERING

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE 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 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. Amen.

SENDING HYMN

"SENT FORTH BY GOD'S BLESSING"

#76 (NCH)

- 1 Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing, the people of God from this dwelling take leave. The service is ended. O now be extended the fruits of our worship in all who believe. The seed of the teaching, receptive hearts reaching, shall blossom in action for God and for all. God's grace did invite us, and love shall unite us to work for God's realm and answer His call.
- 2 With praise and thanksgiving To God ever living, the tasks of our everyday life we will face. Our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring, embracing God's children of each tribe and race. With your grace you feed us, with your light now lead us; unite us as one in this life that we share. Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving Give honor to Christ and that name that we bear.

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

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. Go from here in the joy of God, secure in God's presence around you and within you. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26, "The Priestly Blessing")
Amen.

POSTLUDE

**PREACH THE GOSPEL
AT ALL TIMES
AND WHEN NECESSARY
USE WORDS.** FRANCIS
OF ASSISI

News of the Church:

◆ Video Up-grade

As we record more of our church worship, we are in need of upgrading our video capabilities. The estimated cost of this up-grade is \$5,672.78. The MN Conference of the United Church of Christ has given us a grant of \$2000.00 which leaves us with \$3,672.78 to raise. **If you enjoy the broadcast of our worship services, devotions, music videos, please consider helping us with this project. Donations can be sent to the church at Box 385, Gaylord, MN 55334.**

In addition the opportunity for direct giving has been set up on our web page.

Go to listen2god.org and click on the “Donate” button in the upper right corner.

This will lead you through the process of donating from a credit card or directly from your bank account. There is a small service fee that is charged to the church for each transaction. If you would like to cover that cost, just check the “cover fees” box.

Thank you for helping with this project.

Remember in Prayer: Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and those at Oak Terrace and Golden Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere. We pray with anticipation for the day we can all gather again with our church family. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders during these trying times.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371.

Pastor Dennis will be on vacation July 6 – 13.

Emergency Pastoral needs should be directed to Gail Estenson, Head Deacon.

Thank you to Dr. John McKay for bringing us the message while Pastor Dennis is away.

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Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371.

E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com

Website at listen2god.org

Giving our Gifts to God:

Tithes and Offerings can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ

P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334 or

Dropped by the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Thank you for your continued support for the ministries of this church.

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- ❖ You can view our Church Service online by Friday or Saturday each week. Click on the link to view Service at: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>
- ❖ Weekly devotional available each Tuesday at: www.listen2God.org/worship/devotionals
- ❖ UCC Church Directories are available for pickup inside the north door each Wednesday.
- ❖ Our From the Heart Offering for July is for Worldwide Mobility P.E.T Project. Your donation can be mailed in or dropped off at church on Wednesdays. *Thank you.*

