

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 12, 2020

For video viewing of music and service go to:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEO_pAVddaeV1_dOvvUd5eITX0IJKxqmM

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray together:

C: *Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen*

***THE FIRST LESSON**

Isaiah 55:10-13

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.

***THE SECOND LESSON**

Romans 8:1-11

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For

those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

***THE GOSPEL READING**

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹Let anyone with ears listen!"

¹⁸"Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When 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. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet 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. ²²As 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. ²³But 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."

SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE

We live in the age of the reboot. Every movie and TV show in the past seems like fair game, from science fiction to sitcoms to cartoons to action

franchises and mysteries. And there are lots of different flavors of reboots: there is the complete reset, like with Charlie's Angels for the third - or fourth? - time. There is the re-imagining, like the sitcom One Day at a Time. There is the re-sume format, like with Fuller House or Star Trek: Picard, picking up the story from the old show with the same characters, but decades later. Sometimes the stories are the same, but with new actors; sometimes it's a complete reset, with the same characters but wholly different plots. There are new adaptations, like the Little Women movie from last year. There are sequels and prequels. They're new, but they're not.

Some things do not need a reboot or a remake. Some things stand the test of time. Thankfully they have never actually made Casablanca II or The Princess Bride: The Next Generation. Sometimes, the story and the message it carries persist, with no need for reinterpretation.

I feel like that's the case with today's parable about the sower and the seeds. You can't really jazz it up or reimagine it. Most parables have a lot of room for interpretation, a wealth of possibilities to open our hearts to what the kingdom of heaven is like. But today we have one of the few parables that Jesus actually explains. It's quite straightforward. We don't have to guess about it. We don't really need to add anything to it. The sower sows seeds. They fall on different types of ground. Some grow and bear fruit; others don't. And the seed metaphor carries over, in Jesus' explanation, to how God's word takes root - or doesn't - in various kinds of people. There isn't really even a moral to this parable - it's descriptive. Jesus is simply saying: God's word will grow when the "soil" is right; otherwise, it won't. And the imagery still works today.

You might be in a path situation. The soil is packed hard from all the traffic and wear. The seeds can't take break the surface, and the birds come and eat them. It's like hearing the word of God, but not understanding it - you've become too downtrodden, too jaded, and the message of love and forgiveness can't penetrate. You hear the words, but you don't understand; sounds nice, but not realistic. Not achievable. And what has been sown in your heart is snatched away.

Have you felt at all jaded lately?

You might be in a rocky ground situation. The seeds find some purchase, but there are too many obstacles, and the roots can't go deep. When the heat is turned up, they wither and die. It's like hearing the word of God, and feeling joy at the freedom it brings! But then, when persecution and obstacles set in, on account of that word, and on account of the responsibility that comes with it, the fledgling faith fades away. You hear the message of love and forgiveness, but you can't endure.

Have you felt fatigued lately in your capacity to care, and love, and extend God's love for you to others, beyond your own rocks and obstacles?

You might be in a thorn's situation. The seeds are choked out by the weeds around them. It's like hearing the word of God, but having it drowned out by the cares of the world and the rat race sucking you in.

How thick are the cares of the world around you these days? How much does the lure of wealth, of earthly security in the face of fear and uncertainty, pull you away from the gospel of generosity, from the promise that you have enough?

Or maybe you are in a good soil situation. No birds, no rocks, no thorns. Maybe you have heard the word of God, and understood it, and found the depth of soil to endure in it, despite the evil one's attempts to snatch that good news away, despite the obstacles, despite the choking thorns. Maybe God's love and forgiveness have taken deep root in you, and despite everything else you have been able to bear the fruit of love and forgiveness in turn, providing shade and sustenance for the other plots of soil around you.

I pray that is the case. Thanks be to God if it is! But I know I have felt cynicism. I know I have experienced obstacles. I know I have had my faith perspective obscured by thorns and cares. And I know that I am not alone. I worry about the state of my soil. How is your soil feeling?

Jesus tells a lot of parables. Usually they are not this transparent. Usually they are at least a little opaque. Usually they are painted with broader strokes than seeds and soil and a teacher's guide autographed by Jesus with all the answers. And oftentimes they end with an either/or: either you have ears to hear and you understand, and the Word takes root; or you don't understand, don't follow through, don't bear fruit, and you will be thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And sometimes fire, too.

This is not one of those parables. Why? Because sowers just keep sowing. Farmers. Gardeners. Sowers just keep sowing, tilling, fertilizing, tending, weeding, hoeing, cultivating, watering, caring for their crops and plants and blooms and yields. Season after season. The seeds are planted.

God promises, through the prophet Isaiah, to a people in exile on the brink of returning home: "For as the rain and 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."

Season after season. The rains fall, the seeds are planted, the Word is sown, and God's purpose, the good news of love and forgiveness, is accomplished, the reason that God sends free grace out finds success. The seeds are planted, no matter the soil, season after season, while the seeds that managed to grow and yield fruit extend their branches, in love, ever outward, so that the good soil might increase in this world, and in each of our hearts. You are in Christ, and Christ is in you, and we pray that the Spirit of life who dwells in each of us, who has been planted in each of us, will grow and grow, bringing us from death to life each day. This is not a reboot; it is an ever-unfolding story, each of us stewards of its chapters; each of us stewards of God's Word in our lives.

And God does not stop at planting; God grafts new members onto the vines. God transplants those who are struggling into the shelter of good soil,

entrusting us to care for them. And with each season of restoration and return, reconciliation and reprieve, all of creation rejoices, with the mountains singing and the trees clapping their hands. May all that God sends out, all that God plants in us, find good soil, and take deep root, so that we may yield the fruit of love and righteousness for the sake of a world too full of rocks and thorns, so that we might join in the forests' applause, the mountains' song. Thanks be to God. Amen.

***NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen**

***PRAYERS**

A: Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world. *(A brief silence.)*

A: Gracious God, your word has been sown in many ways and places. We pray for missionaries and newly planted congregations around the world. Inspire us by their witness to the faith we share. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Creating God, the mountains and hills burst into song and the trees and fields clap their hands in praise. We pray for the birds and animals who make their home in the trees, and for lands stripped bare by deforestation. Empower us to sustainably use what you have given. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Reigning God, we pray for our nation's leaders. Increase their desire for justice and equality. We pray for our enemies. Bridge the chasms that divide us and guide authorities to a deep and lasting peace. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Abiding God, care for all who are in need (especially). For those who are doubting, renew faith. For those who are worrying, provide release. For those who are struggling, ease burdens. For those in fear, give hope. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Renewing God, revive your church in this place. Nourish and nurture the seeds you have planted, that we might grow as disciples. Replace what has been depleted. Sustain our ministries (especially) and deepen relationships with the wider community. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, our church as they face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of love ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families. For all our Messiah families and especially this week for the Gustafson, Habron and Harris families. For the talents and good things You have given each of them. Keep them united and faithful to You and each other. Guide them, protect them and equip them to do Your will. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

C: *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.

***BENEDICTION**

P: 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.

C: Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTOR RYAN'S 'OFFICE' HOURS

While Pastor Ryan is not physically here yet, he will be available by email at messiahmechpr@gmail.com; and by phone at (507)-360-7276 . His 'office' hours will be 11am – 8 pm our time since California is three hours behind Virginia. This is such an exciting but strange time for us as we continue to worship from afar. We wish Pastor Ryan and family a safe transition to Virginia when they are able to do so. Pastor Ryan will continue to provide updates to the congregation as moving details are finalized.

PASTOR RYAN'S WEEKLY UPDATE

Hello everyone! Here's the latest on our housing progress. We've had a number of showings on our house in the last week, and we are considering an offer. Please continue to hold us in prayer that there are no unforeseen setbacks or surprises. If this offer comes together, we'll be able to share a moving date soon - thanks again for all your patience and grace! ~Pastor Ryan

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Beginning March 8th, we began providing a summary of the financial well-being of our congregation. Here is this week's information:

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2840 through July 5th (down from \$2936 on June 28th.)
- We are \$13,490.21 behind the year-to-date budget needs (down from \$12,151.21 behind the budget the week prior).

THE PATH TO ZERO DASHBOARD

Harvard Global Health Institute, Harvard's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, Rockefeller Foundation, CovidActNow, Covid-Local, CIDRAP and many others joined forces, launching a new COVID Risk Level map and COVID suppression guidance for policy makers and the public. The map provides statistics by state and by county. Go to: <https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/> to find information for Virginia. This information was provided by the Virginia Synod office.

VIRGINIA SYNOD HUNGER TEAM

The Synod is excited to announce the re-formation of a World Hunger Team! This team provides visioning and resources for hunger ministries around the Synod, around the country, and around the world. The Team works as a partner with ELCA World Hunger, ELCA World Hunger supports projects in 43 U.S. states and territories and 62 countries, including the United States. So far, there are three people sharing their gifts through the Virginia Synod World Hunger Team: Betsy Liljeberg (Apostles, Gloucester), Chuck Hays (Trinity, Moneta), Rebekah Schennum (Emanuel, Woodstock). If you would like be part of this new team, please contact Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick (bayerderrick@vasynod.org).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT – IT'S SUMMERTIME!

Summer is upon us! We hope you continue your faithful giving! Please mail in your offering to the church office, 8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111, or use on-line giving through Vanco which is available on the church website. See messiahmech.com for more details.

PRAYER LIST HAS BEEN RESET

The current prayer list has been reset to begin the third quarter. Please contact Davina if you have names you wish to be added. Email her at [MessiahMech@gmail.com](mailto: MessiahMech@gmail.com) or phone 746-7134 with your requests.

JUNE 29th MARKED 50 YEARS OF THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

You are invited to reach out to thank a woman who is a pastor who's touched your life, in a small way or a big way. It may be a letter, an email or another gesture. If you post it on social media, you can use the hashtag #thankyopastor. If you would like more resources for celebrating, go to <https://elca.org/50yearsofordainedwomen>, which has an adult forum, Bible study, video, and worship materials.

KAIROS IS ON-LINE, JULY 19

Since in-person Kairos has been canceled for 2020, we are hosting Virtual Kairos 2020! Join us July 19-23, 2020 (Sunday evening to Thursday morning) for Virginia Synod rising 9th through 12th Graders. We are going to try and squeeze as much of in-person Kairos into this online event as we can! with large group, small group, daily prayer, t-shirts, CLIPPS, Open Talent Mic Show, faith testimonies, comic relief, reflection time, prayer around the cross, speed friending, songs, t-shirt fashion show, and more! Cost per participant: \$25 and payment is required at time of registration. For more information about registration, and to register online, visit www.vasynod.org/event/kairos.

ELCA PLEDGE TO COMMIT TO ANTI-RACISM

Beyond statements and prayers, we are called to also act and respond to injustices. The ELCA invites you to sign the pledge, "I commit to study, prayer and action to become an anti-racist individual in an anti-racist church," and share your participation on social media using #ELCA4justice. To sign the pledge, go to <https://elca.org/racialjusticepledge>.

CAROLINE FURNACE UPDATE

Summer Camps have been ordered by the state of Virginia to remain closed for now. However, Outdoor Ministry is so much more than Summer Camp. Here is what we are offering this summer:

- Family Rentals - The Farmhouse, Cabin Village, and Sukkah Village are open for Family Rentals in July and August. 14 days of pre-screening are required for all participants. Both the Farmhouse and Sukkah Village are optional no-contact retreat spaces. We can host a maximum of 5 family groups (of 10 or less) on property at once, so spaces are limited and first come, first served. 2020 Summer Camp families get priority booking until June 30. Regular booking opens on July 1.
- Camp at Home* - Register by July 6 for another round of Camp at Home (\$0-50), an exciting online Summer Camp! We are already halfway through our first session and we're having SO MUCH FUN. With Camp at Home, you can see your favorite camp counselors and chaplains, spend time with your "cabin group", and join in on fun activities - all from home! PJs are optional. We can't wait to meet your pets. Bring your own snacks. Choose your own adventure - participate in as few or many parts as you'd like. Optional: sign up for Camp in a Box (\$50) if you'd like to get fun camp surprises and activity supplies delivered right to your door!
- Contact Julie at 540-449-0012 or julie@carolinefurnace.org to sponsor Camp at Home for your kids!

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Those who would like to place announcements in our Sunday 'bulletin' please send them to Donna Shaw at dmsshaw70@gmail.com by Wednesday for inclusion.

Prayer List

WE PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Kenneth Deere
Adam Dworak, Sr.
JoAn Firebaugh
Bill Fulop
Elisabeth Gardner
Werner Gardner
Steve Gilnett
Geoffrey Honan
"Doc" Kondaki
Mac McAllister
Roberta McMillen
Nathan, Ruth Schroeder & family
Judy Schwerdtfeger

WE PRAY FOR OUR EXTENDED FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS

Dee Schroeder, sister-in-law of Roger.
Tim Schroeder, nephew of Roger.
Elizabeth Zimmerman, Karen Morris' daughter-in-law's aunt
T.J., grandson of the Whirleys.

Pastor Ryan, as he begins his journey with us
Our veterans, their fellow soldiers & their waiting families
All law enforcement, firefighters & first responders
The people and pastor, Rev. Katherine, of All Souls Episcopal & our shared ministry

Hospitals, nursing homes, other health care facilities
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The World Health Organization Medical researchers and scientists
Schools, workplaces, government institutions and municipal agencies
For all who travel