

Sermon – The Water and the Seeds  
Sunday, July 16, 2017  
Scripture Readings Psalm 119:105-112, Matthew 13:1-9  
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First Scripture Reading: Psalm 119:105-112

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path.  
<sup>106</sup> I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,  
to observe your righteous ordinances.  
<sup>107</sup> I am severely afflicted;  
give me life, O LORD, according to your word.  
<sup>108</sup> Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD,  
and teach me your ordinances.  
<sup>109</sup> I hold my life in my hand continually,  
but I do not forget your law.  
<sup>110</sup> The wicked have laid a snare for me,  
but I do not stray from your precepts.  
<sup>111</sup> Your decrees are my heritage forever;  
they are the joy of my heart.  
<sup>112</sup> I incline my heart to perform your statutes  
forever, to the end.

Second Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:1-9

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

The title of the sermon: The Water and the Seeds

Let us pray, Gracious God. May the words of my mouth and meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you. Amen

Jesus is many things; a healer, a teacher, our Savior, God, and a storyteller. The stories that Jesus gives to us are gifts that guide us to follow Christ and become disciples. This parable we heard today in the gospel of Mathew is often called the parable of the sower and it shows us how a disciple will respond to God’s word. The parable of the sower could as easily be called the “Parable of the four soils or the parable of the miraculous harvest.”

Maybe it should be called the parable of the Bad Farmer. The sower seems reckless, throwing seeds all over, even in places a farmer would KNOW seeds will not grow. Thorns, Rocks. I'm not a good gardener but even I know the right steps to making a plant grow!

Yet "unlike a modern American farmer, that carefully prepares the soil with just the right pH balance and then injects the seed into the ground, farmers in Jesus' time" would plow the field once and then "cast the seeds out on the ground and then plowed the land" again. The sowing of seeds was a different way of planting than we use today. Sowing the fields happened at a certain time of year.

It was after the first rains, when the water has softened the hard sunbaked soil. The water was the symbol of a time to start! The water prepared the ground so that a harvest would be possible.

Water is so powerful. Without water, we would not have life. In reflecting on the power of water I am reminded of the waters of baptism, the start to a life of faith. Presbyterians baptize all ages because we remember that we are baptized not because of our faith and what we have done but because we know what God has done for us.

This weekend (today) we are celebrating the baptism of my daughter, Daehler Emelia. And it is a joy, like every baptism to see the sign and seal of the covenant of grace made by God in baptism. In baptism we remember that God has claimed us and our joyful response is to be a disciple. Disciples are called to sow the story of our Savior Jesus in the world. To do unto others as you would have done unto you. (Luke 6:31)

Today this congregation promised to sow God's message in the world when we said "I do" to a baby's baptism. You made a commitment to sharing your faith with your community. We make promises to each other by entering into discipleship together.

In the story of the Sower, Jesus is not giving farming advice but instead teaching us how to be disciples. The seed is the word of God, the love of God that needs to be abundantly shared. Jesus is the original sower of the good news and we are to follow his example and share the good news with the children we baptize and the stranger alike.

The NPR show of This American Life shares a story of a child learning about God and discipleship. In one episode of a segment called "Kid's Logic" a father is explaining to his daughter the story of Jesus. It started around Christmas where he shared the birth story of Jesus.

His daughter loved everything about Jesus and wanted to know more. So father and daughter read a lot about Jesus' teaching and life and that Jesus taught "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." She loved Jesus. He was her hero.

And then one day they drove past a big church and out front was an enormous crucifix. And she asked, "Who is that?" The father had not gotten to that part of the story... so he told her that Jesus upset the Roman government. The message that Jesus had was so radical and unnerving to the prevailing authorities of the time that they had to kill him. They came to the conclusion that Jesus would have to die. That message was too troublesome.

About a month later the daughter's preschool was celebrating Martin Luther King Day and on their table was a newspaper that had a huge drawing of Martin Luther King. She asked, "Who is that?" The father explained he was a preacher and he had a message. That you should treat everybody the same no matter what they look like. And she thought about that for a minute and looked to her father and asked, "Did they kill him too?"

A Father tried to explain to his daughters that her hero, Jesus, (and others that carried His message like Martin Luther King Jr.) were killed for preaching something so difficult for many to live out.

The disciple remembers that the story of Jesus does not end in death. It goes on to the resurrection to demonstrate even death can't stop God. And as we participate in communion today, we remember that gift. Communion reminds us that God walks alongside us. We are not alone as we spread God's word. God guides us.

Psalm 119 speaks to how God is with us. This wisdom psalm is the longest psalm in the bible. And the psalmist moves back and forth between delight in God's presence and a plea for God's help in life's trials. "This tension of the psalm is a strength, for it echoes the life of a disciple and lets God's people know that the word of God is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path."

I thought of letting my three year old preach today. Because earlier this week Scott proclaimed to his grandparents out of the blue, "You are never, never alone. Because God is always with you." The sermon would have been very short, but so true! On our journey to discipleship God, our guiding light, is always with you.

How does the parable of the sower, this gift, guide you? When we follow God, amazing things can happen. At the end of the parable we hear "Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." To the farmers listening, they would know that this parable ends in a miracle. "Sevenfold meant a good year for a farmer, a tenfold meant true abundance.

Thirtyfold would have fed a village for a year and a hundredfold would let a farmer retire to a villa by the Sea of Galilee." The parable ends in a miracle. Because following God produces wonders. What wonders have you seen God do? With God enemies forgive each other, the hungry are fed, the lonely are comforted, rulers bow, and God's light shines in the darkness.

When we remember what God has done for us already we are strengthened to the effort of sharing God's message.

Christ's followers are baptized and the water is the start to the path of discipleship. The sacraments teach us of God's gift of salvation—of the saving work that has already been done for us in Jesus Christ. With the seeds of a parable and through the waters of baptism, disciples are strengthened to spread God's good news to a hurting world. AMEN