

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -7th Sunday After Pentecost - July 12, 2026

00:03

[Music]

00:14

I'm glad you're here. Welcome to worship.

00:19

These many Sundays after Pentecost are an opportunity for us to reflect on what it means to be church.

00:29

That takes a lot of different directions, and today we'll spend some time interpreting the parable that Jesus tells about seeds scattered willy-nilly and what becomes of it.

00:43

As many of us garden or farm, we probably have direct experience with how some of this works, but the interpretation might be another story.

00:54

so we'd like to spend a little bit more time with that.

00:57

And part of that reflection will include

01:01

the bit of a handout that you received this morning.

01:04

And you can be forgiven for reading ahead

01:06

and glancing at that.

01:08

So we'll talk about that though during the sermon.

01:13

We are bringing something back for a few weeks

01:16

that is maybe familiar, I have a hunch it is,

01:19

that the Psalms can be sung.

01:23

And I think that was how they were designed in the beginning.

01:26

So we're going to try our voices at that once again

01:30

for a few weeks.

01:31

And you will notice that the singing is interspersed

01:35

with the reading.

01:37

And the tunes are ones that are familiar to us

01:40

from the hymnal.

01:43

And so you will notice that the parts that are emboldened

01:47

are the parts that we will sing.

01:50

Any questions on that?

01:53

I have a hunch you're more familiar and acquainted than I, so I'll leave you to it.

02:18

Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 13th chapter. "That same day Jesus went

02:27

out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him

02:33

that he got into a boat and sat there while the whole crowd stood on the beach.

02:41

And Jesus told them many things in parables saying, 'Listen, a sower went

02:48

to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path and the birds came and ate them up.

02:57

Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil and they sprang up quickly

03:05

since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched. Since they had no root,

03:13

they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

03:22

Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

03:32

If you have ears, here are. Here then the parable of the sewer. When anyone hears the word of the

03:43

does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been

03:48

sown in the heart. This is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on

03:56

rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it

04:01

with joy. Yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when

04:08

trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls

04:15

away. As for what was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the

04:23

word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word and it

04:29

yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears

04:36

the word and understands it who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a

04:43

hundredfold and another 60 and another 30. We hear the gospel of the Lord.
Praise

04:54

to you, O Christ. Won't you be seated.

05:05

[Pause]

The Sermon

05:15

Grace and peace from the one who creates--

05:19

who continues to create-- who gives life.

05:29

Some of you may be familiar with detective stories on TV where they show you a little

05:35

bit of what happened in the previous episode and there's that caption that says "previously,"

05:41

well you need to know that to know what's coming next usually.

05:46

This is what the Gospel writer Matthew does for us in helping us to interpret the parable

05:53

of the sower.

05:56

We look back to those words that are not throw away words, but words that have a purpose.

06:04

That same day, Jesus left the house.

06:10

The same day as what you wonder, well the same day that people approach the house, these

06:16

and they said Jesus your family are looking for you. And Jesus does something

06:24

that is unheard of and shocking, at least in his culture and his time. He

06:34

takes the notion of family and expands it to the point where it's almost not

06:40

recognizable to the hearer. "Who is Jesus family?" he says, "but all of those who do

06:49

the will and work of the kingdom." And then we hear Jesus going outside,

06:59

encountering crowds needing to be in a boat so that the crowds on the beach

07:03

could listen to him tell the story of seeds scattered and what becomes of them.

07:13

It's not often that in the Gospel of Matthew a parable is interpreted, certainly by Jesus.

07:20

He might take his disciples aside and explain things to them from time to time.

07:25

But here, in a very public way, in a public venue, Jesus interprets the parable in a way

07:32

that English majors would call an allegory where details stand for something

07:41

along the way. I'm going to collapse this allegory a little bit just to note that

07:48

whenever the kingdom is proclaimed or lived out that it's not always met with

07:56

celebration and receptivity, not even when Jesus proclaims it. Sometimes there's

08:04

polite indifference, sometimes there is systemic opposition, and sometimes there

08:11

is downright oppression.

08:19

So what is this seed that engenders so many different responses? This seed that

08:28

sort of pops up wherever it feels like.

08:35

Well that brings us to the handout you received this morning. I think it

08:42

illustrates maybe in a nutshell, oh there's a seed analogy right there, in a

08:46

nutshell what the rule and the realm of God is about, what the kingdom of God is

about.

08:55

This comes from a book called "Manna and Mercy" written by now of blessed memory, Pastor Dan

09:03

Erlander, who was an art major as well as a theology major.

09:08

So he did his own illustrating and he liked to think in pictures.

09:16

picture that we look at today I knew would take too long to describe and I

09:22

wasn't sure if I was up to the task so I thought well if you're looking at it we

09:26

can talk through it together and it'll make a lot more sense. You notice that

09:32

this picture is pyramid shaped. This represents the brokenness of our world

09:41

world. And this pyramid scheme, if I can use that word, has been with us in one way or

09:51

another, in one degree or another, since the beginning. Now in this particular drawing,

10:00

Pastor Dan was thinking of both the Roman Empire and the Pharaoh's Egypt. You will notice

10:09

of the apex of his drawing of pyramid. This is where the big deals live, he would call them.

10:19

The god figures, the rulers, those who receive all the benefits that come up from below,

10:26

and who put pressure downward on the people who are in these lower echelon.

10:35

It's the pyramid scheme that God seeks to defeat.

10:45

How does that happen?

10:46

Well, in the case of Israel, there's the liberation and people escaping slavery.

10:55

Later in this book, Man at Mercy, Pastor Dan talks about the lessons that people learn

11:02

post-escape as they're wandering the wilderness in search of a promised land.

11:09

I think the lessons sound very much like the kingdom of God.

11:15

Friendship with God.

11:18

Friendship with creation.

11:21

Friendship with each other.

11:25

And being a man of society is a lesson that we've never totally quite learned.

11:31

But the lesson of manna was a couple of fold.

11:35

One is that creation provides.

11:42

The other lesson, when people would take this manna and hoard it and try to sell it as a

11:49

commodity and try to hedge their bets for the future, it rotted. Moral to the

11:57

story, "Hoarding stinks," Dan would say. The man of society, the man of ethic is very

12:07

much the same thing as the kingdom of God. And so why would there be resistance?

12:16

Well, for one thing, even for us it's a tough way to live. Because this is a

12:23

system that's baked into our day-to-day existence, the pyramid scheme. We know it,

12:29

it's part of our life, maybe we complain about it, but it seems like it's hard

12:35

wired into our existence.

12:46

So besides being a tough way to live and a way that is in contrast, think about the big deals up here.

12:56

They benefit from this system. I don't think they're going to go away quietly and I don't think they're going to applaud the man of society.

13:08

What I'm about to say may at first sound political.

13:13

And I'm going to say it anyway.

13:15

If we understand politics as literally "holus" the people,

13:21

how are the people cared for?

13:26

There is rhetoric in our country and the one immediately do self

13:31

that if you help people with health care or housing or education, that's a scary

13:42

thing. It's called socialism. And there are some who would like us to run, run, run,

13:48

run away from even any thought of that.

13:54

My response, and please forgive me if I have way out of line here, but I feel

14:01

compelled to tell you, that sort of appeal to fear is a defense for the

14:09

pyramids game.

14:22

So this rule in a realm of God, this kingdom of God that we talk about, this

14:29

ethic of manna and neighborliness is not something that we give up on. What is

14:40

our prayer every week? But thy kingdom come, thy will be done. And besides giving

14:46

you handouts, I'm going to quote the catechism. So some of you this might make

14:50

you feel young and some of you might think, "Oh, that was not a good time for me."

14:58

But in explaining that part of the Lord's Prayer, Dr. Martin Luther says that God is

15:05

giving this kingdom always.

15:09

The prayer that we say is a prayer that somehow we would find that kingdom coming into us,

15:19

it would be like that seed planted and that it would deliver results.

15:31

It's also important maybe to talk about the scale at which Jesus tells this

15:37

story. It's a tall tale and we all know it. But the commentator, Warren Carter,

15:43

says Jesus isn't doing this just to be funny or to get our attention

15:47

necessarily as a gimmick. But what if this amazing yield of a hundredfold in a

15:56

world where we're used to seven to ten percent if we're lucky? What if in God's

16:03

economy that can happen? It invites us into a bit of holy imagining of Eden, the

16:11

creation when life burst forth, when God pronounces it good and very good. It also

16:20

calls our imaginations forward. Forward to a time, again, where all things are set

16:29

right and creation does what it was meant to do and we live as we are meant

16:34

to live.

16:39

Maybe the word "abundance" is okay to use in this context.

16:50

Even now, we are accustomed, I think, to push back against the rule and the realm of God.

17:01

Against that notion that we need to be running 24/7, otherwise things just won't work.

17:07

Hey, let's take a break once in a while. Nature does. Why can't we?

17:18

But I think the good news, and this is going to be quite the exegetical leap

17:24

that maybe a seminary professor which has ties me for. But I can't help but to

17:29

think about the expansiveness and the persistence of God. Those seeds that the

17:35

birds eat? They get carried to other places don't they? And even as they fall

17:43

through bird bombing, some of those germinate too. So if we think about God

17:53

as an extravagant creator who finds loopholes and is as some would say in

17:59

the business of hisness, of things continuing like those weeds that burst

18:04

through the concrete in your sidewalk in your driveway, what if that's how God's

18:12

stubborn and steadfast love works? What if in those tiny and subversive ways this

18:21

kingdom that we pray for is finding its way into us and among us and God willing

18:32

someday for all of us. There's a phrase I use a lot and now you know where it

18:44

comes from if you look at the title of the handout today. God's unfolding plan

18:52

for the mending of the universe.

18:57

When we pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," I think we do what a sign we

19:07

have at home says. Pray big. We are praying big and it's not our bigness

19:17

that makes the prayer big. It is the one to whom we pray whose will it is that

19:26

that this world will be loved back into wholeness.

19:33

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

19:38

Amen.