

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost - Year A

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Isaiah 55:10-13

Psalms 65[1-8]9-13

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

07/16/2023

### Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

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.”

The Gospel of Our Lord

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **A Life of Faith**

Good morning! During vacation this week I got to do something pretty cool. Thursday morning at 9:30 my family gathered around the pool at the rental home we were staying at so that I could baptize my twin nephews. My grandmother, aunt, uncle, mom, dad, sister, brother-in-law, niece and nephew, brother, sister-in-law, my brother's daughter, and the twins were all there. Megan was there via FaceTime. I didn't have a paschal candle, so my own baptismal candle, which hasn't been lit since 1987, stood in for the job. It was great to have help from my niece and nephew, the two that were here a few weeks ago, and they stood in as worship assistants. The twins were almost cooperative as I took them one at a time into the pool to use seashells that were given to me last week by Pam Hartfiel. It was wonderful! For a baptism, I set the standard pretty low, and my only goal is to make sure I don't drop a baby, which I thankfully didn't do.

I've been present for all my nieces' and nephews' baptisms, and as I was thinking about this text, thinking about all their baptisms, and the baptism I just did, I couldn't help but reflect on the challenge of having a

faith that sticks. One of the commitments that are made during baptisms is that the community agrees to help foster growth of faith among the family and the individual baptized. This is especially important for sponsors, or “Godparents,” as they’re often called. If a parent isn’t taking their kid to some sort of worship opportunity it falls on the sponsors or other family to make sure it happens. Just like our Gospel lesson, there are SO many variables that need to fall into place to make sure that the seed can have a chance to grow!

The text today is unique in that unlike most of the more confusing things that Jesus says, he actually offers up an explanation for this one. In verses 1-9 he presents the parable, and in verses 18-23 he explains what he meant. So, since Jesus did all the hard work, I figured I would instead focus on some modern examples of the challenges that one faces when trying to sow good seed in the ground.

The parable opens with seed that falls on the ground and is snatched up. Jesus tells us that this is what happens when someone doesn’t understand what was spoken or shared. This is especially important for church communities to remember. What’s the point in having a worship service if it’s so complicated to follow along that any guests are so intimidated that they never come back? Or what about the hyper intelligent pastor who is stuck in an ivory tower, preaching above what any normal person might understand, why would someone want to come back and try again if none of it makes any sense?

The seed that is scorched is one I saw a lot in YoungLife. When a high school student went to camp in the summer it was a deeply powerful experience. It was easy to get caught up in the wonder of God’s story of grace as they were surrounded by friends. But the challenges hit hard when

they came home. At camp, routine was broken, so it was easier to adopt something new. But when a new believer, of any age, is home it be easy to fall back into older patterns. This seed is very similar to the one that falls among the thorns. There may be a desire to grow, but the burdens of life choke out all the chances. How many of us have friends who want to be part of a faith community but are just so busy with everything else in life that it becomes almost impossible. When you think about it, it's a wonder that anyone ever succeeds in fostering a faith-filled life! I think we have the grace of God to thank for that.

So, what is a believer to do? Our responsibility is twofold. First, we need to make sure that our own faith is planted in good soil. This means actively working to keep out the thorns, to pull out the weeds, to make sure that God's word is given a chance to dwell in our hearts deeply. This is certainly easier said than done. The second responsibility is to make sure that God's word is given a chance to grow for others. This means keeping the birds away, keeping the seed off the rocky path, pulling more weeds and thorns so that others might receive the same growth that we have been blessed with!

Because at the end of the day, that's what we truly want. As I looked at my family this past week I was struck by how blessed I was to be a part of their lives! From the twins Graham and Henry who I baptized as they squirmed in my hands, to their older sister Isla who you could hear asking questions in her cute little voice during the service. And then there were Ella and Brody who are both teenagers, who have grown up and who now share their own faith as they help with their younger cousins. God's word deserves every chance to take root in all lives, and it's our responsibility to

help it grow, or heck, to at least make sure we don't make things worse!

Because as Jesus said, when it does grow, the fruit will be wonderful. Amen.