

***Simple Prayer, Simple Praise:***  
**A Worship Service for Sunday, July 12, 2020**

**Opening Acclamation: (Psalm 65:1, 9-14)**

You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem. You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of water. You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth. You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase. You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty. May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy. May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; let them shout for joy and sing.

**A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 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. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

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

**Meditation     *(by The Rev. Kim Rossi, St. Stephen's Episcopal and Bethany Lutheran; Olean)***

I grew up across the road from a dairy farm. I spend summers running through sheep fields and the dairy barn; gathering eggs for a quarter a day. The best days were in Spring, riding the tractor as crops were planted. Once the fields were plowed and seeds planted, I enjoyed walking to the fields often to see how the corn had grown. By July, when temperatures were heating up, some stalks had grown, and some stalks, mostly on the edges, were far behind and some just withered away back into the soil. I asked the farmer, Mr. Feigle, why they didn't all grow the same. He told me that he did his best to give the seeds good soil, that God gave the seeds rain and sun, but the rest was up to the seed. This memory seemed to me a bit like today's gospel. Yes, Mr. Feigle

was talking about corn and Jesus was talking about the word of God, but to each the seeds and the soil were important.

Things were heating up for Jesus at this point in time and the Pharisees are now plotting to destroy him. Jesus is experiencing much hostility by some who disregard his message and his ministry. This parable of the Sower examines the problem of various kinds of soil and their different responses to the “word of the kingdom.” The seed and the soil. Seeds sowed by a generous God and soil, some responsive and some not. What about that soil, the hardened, rocky and thorny soil. Since soil cannot change itself, is there any hope for this unresponsive soil, and sometimes, even the fertile soil that doesn’t produce. Mr. Feigle gave his seeds good soil and yet some failed. I think each of us has a patch of all those soils within us. We sometimes play it safe, resist creativity and new ideas for fear they will fail, deny the changes which are needed to promote a bumper crop for the Kingdom. We hold onto old ways and resources when others are in need. Is there any hope? Fortunately, God will not give up on us. God trusts us to abandon fears and take risks for a bumper crop and the Kingdom. If not now, then when?



**Prayer:**

*Almighty God, sow in our hearts compassion for all who are oppressed and denied justice, give us strength so we may grow to serve Christ in the person of the needy and the brokenhearted; this we ask in Christ’s name. **Amen.***

Raise your concerns in prayer using the words our Savior Christ taught us:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by 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  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Grace:**

*Bless us, Almighty God, with the awareness of how we have lived as privileged persons in a land of prosperity. Alert us to the knowledge that such benefits we enjoy are not equally bestowed upon many of our peers. Awaken us to the need to repent for unwillingness to see the humanity in our neighbor, and open our eyes, our hands, and our feet so we may embrace the work of justice which is desperately needed in our nation and the world. **Amen.***



Each Sunday at 10 a.m., Bishop Sean and other leaders from WNY and NWPA will lead worship via the Zoom platform. Anyone can join the service via phone by calling **646-876-9923** use **code 127336938#**. Those wishing to join by instead of video can use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/127336938> If you are asked for a password, use **lakeerie**.

*Simple Prayer, Simple Praise* is produced for The Episcopal Dioceses of NWPA and WNY by the Rev. Steve Lane and the Rev. Claudia Scheda, and guest contributors as noted. July 2020.