

*Faith Lutheran Church*

Sunday, July 12, 2020  
*6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*



**Call to Worship**

We gather together in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Call to Confession**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. May we take a moment to go before God in open and honest confession.

**Prayer of Confession**     *(please join in confessing our sins)*

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your holy name. Amen**

**Declaration of Forgiveness**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by His authority alone, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

**Opening Prayer**

Please join me in prayer:

**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.**

**Readings and Psalm**

- **Isaiah 55:10-13**                     *The growth of the word to accomplish God's purpose*
- **Psalm 65:[1-8] 9-13**             *Your paths overflow with plenty. (Ps. 65:11)*
- **Romans 8:1-11**                    *Live according to the Spirit*

### ***The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23***

*In Matthew's gospel, both Jesus and His disciples "sow the seed" of God's word by proclaiming the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near." Now, in a memorable parable, Jesus explains why this good news produces different results in those who hear.*

<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!"

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

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to You, O Christ.**

### **Sermon**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

I shared a story on social media the other day entitled, "Clover Lawns: The Benefits and Why Clover Went Out of Style". Clover is that white weed-looking flower that pops up in yards.

I purposely tagged my husband in the post because I wanted to be sure he saw it. You see, he likes clover. If you look at the backyard at the parsonage, you will see several patches of clover that haven't been mowed over. The clover is quite a bit taller than the rest of the grass. At our cabin in Curtis, we have a LOT of clover in the yard.

For me, clover had always been just a pesky weed. Not that I ever wanted to put any chemicals on it to get rid of it. I just wanted the white flowers mowed down so that all one would see is green.

Growing up on a farm downstate, I remember clover growing in the fields. I thought it was just a weed back then also and never gave it much thought. But it *has* a purpose. "Clover keeps weeds down on farm fields for the upcoming year. This helps cut down on herbicide use and costs, too."

[https://www.lawnstarter.com/blog/lawn-care-2/were-thinking-over-why-we-kill-clover/?fbclid=IwAR1nFvQM-a88DzI6PagqP0ORTt2LfrgiZLomNAUFUT6Hf2Tqa71t3G\\_P6rc](https://www.lawnstarter.com/blog/lawn-care-2/were-thinking-over-why-we-kill-clover/?fbclid=IwAR1nFvQM-a88DzI6PagqP0ORTt2LfrgiZLomNAUFUT6Hf2Tqa71t3G_P6rc)

According to the article I recently shared, there are some benefits to clover. “Clovers – specifically *Trifolium repens* - have for centuries been domesticated ground cover plants or livestock forage plants. Clover is a legume, in the same plant family as peas, beans, and peanuts. Its common names include white clover, white Dutch clover, Dutch clover and ladino clover. While it is native to the Mediterranean, it was introduced into the United States early in the colonial days. By 1747, it was common enough that Benjamin Franklin noted red clover’s value in improving pastures. Today, it grows readily from Canada to Texas, from Florida to Alaska.”

Several decades ago, clover was (quote) “a standard part of grass seed mixes. With more homeowners today avoiding the use of pesticides, it’s likely clovers could come back in style again as (drumroll) a wonderful part of your lawn.”

According to Melissa Sharapova, an expert on permaculture and landscaping, “clover provides many ecological services. Clovers are a beneficial addition to turfgrass because they fix atmospheric nitrogen into soil fertilizer, with the aid of root nodules [and] colonies of symbiotic bacteria. Clover also draws up and accumulates trace minerals. When clover decomposes, it makes the minerals available to the lawn grass and soil life. The grass becomes more disease resistant because of the health benefits of clover.”

So, what happened to make us dislike clover so much that we wanted to eradicate it from our lawns? According to the article, “About 60 years ago, a war began on broadleaf plants. The ones who waged it: gardening and agricultural chemical companies, the very same who create herbicides we use today. These herbicides tend to have no effect on grasses — but they kill everything else, clovers included.”

We – my husband, actually – like clover because we have chickens who love it. It makes great compost and it feeds the lawn. A friend of mine commented that she has clover in her yard because it feeds the bumblebees. I’ve got a feeling I’m going to be seeing a lot more clover in our yards!

As I was thinking about my sermon for today, I wondered where the clover came from in the first place since it is just in patches. Did the seed come from the grass seed that was planted two years ago? Did it blow over from one of the neighbor’s yards? How did it miraculously just appear one day? Well, clover IS one of God’s creations! But how did it get *there*? And why isn’t the entire yard covered in clover?

In our gospel reading for today from Matthew 13, Jesus tells the crowd the parable of the sower in the first nine verses and then explains the parable in the last six verses. I just shared it so I won’t repeat it. We’ve probably all heard many sermon interpretations on this parable.

It’s been different lately, though, sowing the seed during the pandemic. You see, us pastors haven’t been able to sow the seed – the Word of God - where and how the seed *typically* is sown – in the pews - on Sunday mornings. I’m not saying the pews on Sunday mornings are the *only* places that the seed is sown. But that is one of the ways we *typically* view sowing the seed. Pastors preach the Word of God – the seed - to the parishioners who then carry the Word beyond the walls and spread it into the homes and hearts of family members and friends who then spread it to their family members and friends and so on.

For the past several months, the “typical” way didn’t work. Pastors and other church leaders had to find other unique ways to share God’s Word outside of the church building. We’ve thrown that seed on the

airways and social media. That seed has been tossed (with care) in envelopes and mailed to members. That seed has been scattered on computer keyboards and miraculously appeared on other's computer screens or cellphones or other technological devices.

That seed has been spread far and wide. Maybe even farther than we ever anticipated or knew was possible! The Word of God has popped up in homes that haven't had the seed shared there in a while, if ever. Even as churches resume in-person services, that seed continues to be spread, blossom, and flourish! That seed continues to nourish our spiritual being.

Which then leads me to ask you this: where else can the seed be spread? How might YOU help in spreading the seed? Will you pass along the seed you have received – the service you receive in the mail or forward the email to someone? Will you invite someone to view the church's Facebook page or website? It's pretty easy to spread the seed right now. With the click of a keystroke or by putting a stamp on an envelope, sharing the Word of God can be shared everywhere and faster than ever before!

In 1 Peter 4:11, we hear, "Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ."

Jesus and His disciples spread the Word of God among God's people. Through the Holy Spirit we spread the Word of God to our family members and friends, to our neighbors and community, and the world.

It's like those little patches of clover in the parsonage back yard. They appeared from somewhere. They've been watered by the rain. They've been nurtured by the sun. And, believe me, they've spread. And now they provide nourishment to animals and flying creatures.

Take the seed you have received. Nourish your life with it. Let it blossom and flourish. And then spread it far and wide. **Amen.**

### **Blessing**

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

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

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.

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.

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.

Abiding God, care for all who are in need. 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. We lift up those we ask special blessings upon, naming them in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices....(please name your prayer concerns).

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 and deepen relationships with the wider community.

Eternal God, we give thanks for all who have died. Comfort us in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

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

### **Our Lord's Prayer**

*I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to pray...*

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever. Amen**

### **Offering**

It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following this service, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry.

### **Offertory Prayer**

Blessed are you,

**O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through Your goodness You have blessed us with these gifts.**

**With them we offer ourselves to Your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that You have made, for the sake of Him who gave Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

### **Benediction**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Christ is with you!

**Thanks be to God!**

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