

Saint Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church

Pentecost 6, Proper 10, July 12, 2020

READINGS:

Isaiah 55:10-13

Psalm 65:1-8, 9-14

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Listen!" Jesus says in our reading from Matthew's Gospel for today. "Let anyone with ears listen!"

Jesus is getting ready to tell a parable to a big crowd on the seashore. Matthew tells us that the crowd is so big that Jesus gets into a boat and teaches from there. The parable is one about the abundance of God, and the generosity possible for those who live in God's Kingdom. We know it as the "Parable of the Sower".

Ron Rolheiser, who writes for the Saint Louis University Sunday Web Site, introduces the parable this way:

"The sun is extraordinarily generous, giving huge parts of itself away every second.

Scientists tell us that every second, inside the sun, the equivalent of 4 million elephants are being transformed into light, an irretrievable, one-time gift. The sun is giving itself away. If this generosity should halt, all energy would eventually lose its source and everything would die and become inert. We, and everything on our planet, live because of the generosity of the sun.

In this generosity, the sun reflects the abundance of God, a largesse that invites us also to be generous, to have big hearts, to risk more in giving ourselves away in self-sacrifice, to witness to God's abundance."

Jesus doesn't often explain the meaning of his parables, but this time he does tell the disciples what the seeds in his story represent, and what he means by the different places the seed falls. And, he tells them about the enormous yield produced by the seed that falls on "good soil."

In Jesus' day, farmers sowed crops by walking through the fields flinging handfuls of seed across the land from a bag carried over their shoulders. The fields were plowed after they were seeded in order to cover the seed. It was expected that seed would sometimes fall on hard ground, pathways, rocky areas, and unprepared ground. Hungry birds, sunburned seeds, and thorns were to be expected. Farmers harvested at most a tenfold return from the seeds they planted. Jesus' description of thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold yields from the seeds that fell into good soil must simply have boggled the imaginations of his listeners!

The sower in Jesus' story, God, is abundant and generous, so rich in love and mercy that he can afford to be wasteful. Abundance and generosity are God's nature. He showers all of us with more blessings than we can handle or deserve. We may ask, "Why not be more frugal in sowing? Shouldn't you be more careful, giving things away?" God's response might be, "Why? I have plenty of seeds!"

"Listen!" Jesus says in our reading from Matthew's Gospel for today. "Let anyone with ears listen!"

Saint Paul tells us in his letter to the church in Rome that Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. He says we "...are in the Spirit, since the spirit of God dwells in you." We live, then, in God's Kingdom. We are able to set our minds on "the things of the Spirit." We don't need worry about being generous, or having big hearts, or giving ourselves away. We may not have plenty of seeds all the time, ourselves. But God does. He has plenty, for us, and for anyone we choose to give them to!

And in our reading from the prophet Isaiah today, we hear that when the word of God goes forth, it will accomplish what God sends it to do. It will be, Isaiah says, like the rain and snow that come from heaven to water the earth and make it plenteous. We don't need to worry about the birds, or the rocks, or the thorns, or the burning sun. We just need to throw that seed out, near and far, to yield thirty, or sixty, or a hundredfold!

Remember Ron Rolheizer's four million elephants per second being transformed into light by the sun? Don't worry! Thanks be to God, being generous and big-hearted doesn't have to involve transforming elephants! It can be as simple as breathing a prayer for someone who

needs it. It can be as simple as making a contribution to a food bank in a time of pandemic when lots of neighbors need food for their tables. It can be as simple as calling or texting a friend to see how they are doing in a time when most of us feel insecure and even lonely. We are a community where the Spirit of God lives. We don't need to be frugal. God has plenty of seeds!

"Listen!" Jesus says in our reading from Matthew's Gospel for today. "Let anyone with ears listen! Hear then, the parable of the sower."

Amen.