

How appropriate that in the middle of summer we hear readings from scripture that speak of the fruitful earth. Looking around outside we likely see a cavalcade of green. Trees and grass, plants and flowers are nourished by the summer rain and sun. When we gather together here on Sunday our faith is nourished by the Lord through word and sacrament. Let us pray that we may be rich soil for the word of God to take root, bloom, and thrive across the earth.

As we gather together let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith: Page 102

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (bow as we say) and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introductory Rite:

Greeting:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite:

My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

Lord Jesus, you sow the seeds of mercy and reconciliation among us: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you shower us with mercy and kindness: Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you nourish us with your body and blood: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who for the faith they profess are accounted Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honor.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading Page 84

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Isaiah 55:10-11

Thus says the LORD: Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

R/. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

R/. The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

You have visited the land and watered it; greatly have you enriched it.

God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain. **R/.**

Thus have you prepared the land: drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods, softening it with showers, blessing its yield. **R/.**

You have crowned the year with your bounty, and your paths overflow with a rich harvest; the untrilled meadows overflow with it, and rejoicing clothes the hills. **R/.**

The fields are garmented with flocks and the valleys blanketed with grain. They shout and sing for joy. **R/.**

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Romans 8:18-23

Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.Gospel

Matthew 13:1-23 or 13:1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Glory to you, Lord

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

[The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says:

You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them.

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

"Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."]

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Word:

Isaiah couldn't have had the scientific understanding we have today of the water cycle, but he nailed it in the metaphor we read today. Water falls from the sky in the form of precipitation, provides hydration for plants and trees so they can bear fruit, collects in rivers and lakes to provide a necessary resource for humans and animals, then returns to the heavens having nourished and sustained life here on earth. So too does God's word. When spoken from the heavens, it has a creative (think of the creation story in Genesis) and transformative (think of the Transfiguration story in the Gospels) effect. It does God's will here on earth (Jesus as the Word come down from heaven). It nourishes us and sustains us even as it rises back to the heavens to continue the cycle of life.

At first glance, the sower seems to be doing a lousy job of sowing. Why throw seed onto a path or on rocky ground where it has little chance of germinating? Why not take the time to pull the thorns first so that they won't choke the plants later? Wouldn't it make the most sense to sow all the seed in rich soil? But God will not limit where the seed goes. Everyone gets a chance to receive God's grace, no matter what obstacles may be in the way. God's wild extravagance gives goodness a chance to bloom in unexpected and unlikely places, allowing it to bear fruit far beyond expectations.

It is natural to listen to the Gospel and try to determine which spot on the ground we are. Am I the rich soil or the rocky ground? If we're honest, perhaps we'll realize that we can be each of the options at different times. Sometimes God's word just doesn't take root or is choked off by material concerns to which I give greater priority. Let us resolve to be fertile ground for God's living, transformative word as often as possible.

Question of the Week How can I be more receptive to God's word, like rich soil? What specific action can I accomplish this week to bear fruit?

Prayer of the Faithful:

Inspired by the word of God, we turn now to the Lord with our needs and the needs of our sisters and brothers around the world.

For the Church, that we may emulate the model of the sower and that the seed we sow may produce good fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

That the thorns of disease, hunger, and poverty that have a chokehold on the most vulnerable may be cleared away, thereby allowing the fruits of God's goodness to flourish in all corners of the world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For an end to gun violence, that we may collectively turn toward peace and bring forth a world without the senseless loss of life in shootings, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those struggling to recover from natural disasters—storms and floods, fires and earthquakes—that they may find assistance, comfort, and hope, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those on summer vacations, that they may return home safely, renewed and refreshed from their travels, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

God of all, we turn to you in our time of need. Instill your word ever more deeply in us so that we may bear fruit to be shared with others. Grant this and all our prayers through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: Page 134

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

Having consumed these gifts, we pray, O Lord, that, by our participation in this mystery, its saving effects upon us may grow.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Concluding Rite:

Final Blessing:

May the Lord bless us,  protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ! **Thanks be to God.**