

Suggested Opening Song: All Creatures of our God and King, #157

On this midsummer day, Jesus invites us to sit back and listen to the master storyteller tell three parables about the kingdom of heaven. Instead of describing it literally, Jesus uses parables to explore its aspects and express its richness. Once again, he speaks of a farmer sowing seed. Let us pray that the seed that is the word of God may find fertile soil in each of us so that we may come to a deeper understanding of our faith.

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

Profession of Faith p. 142

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: p. 10

Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

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

Opening Prayer:

Show favor, O Lord, to your servants and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace, that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity, they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.

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

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p. 46

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

There is no god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned. For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all. For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved; and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity. But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us; for power, whenever you will, attends you. And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

R/. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

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You, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you.
Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading. **R/.**

All the nations you have made shall come and worship you, O LORD,
and glorify your name. For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds; you alone are God. **R/.**

You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity.
Turn toward me, and have pity on me; give your strength to your servant. **R/.**

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Romans 8:26-27

Brothers and sisters: The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

Matthew 13:24-43 or 13:24-30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Glory to you, Lord

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

[He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.' "

He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened."

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:

I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear."]

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Word:

- The weed in the first parable we hear today is dandelion, an insidious weed because in its early stages of growth it looks very much like wheat. Sometimes referred to as "false wheat," it can induce sleep or even death. No wonder Jesus expected that most people would agree that it should be pulled out as soon as possible. But because in their early stages dandelion is difficult to distinguish from good wheat, trying to eradicate one hundred percent of the bad wheat would also eradicate some percentage of the good wheat. And the kingdom of heaven is not a place where even one shoot of good wheat should be thrown out with the bad. Hence the call to wait until the good wheat and the false wheat have matured and shown their true natures. In a similar way, we may perceive someone as toxic, but they may just not have matured yet.
- You know what else looks alike? Three measures of wheat flour and three measures of wheat flour with a handful of yeast mixed in. No one can tell just from looking at both piles initially, or even when each is made into dough. But over time, one will rise and the other will not. The kingdom of heaven in our midst may likewise be imperceptible, hidden among all the worldly matters that manifest themselves in the headlines or within our neighborhoods or towns. But like mustard seeds, the kingdom blossoms and grows among us, microscopically at first, but eventually large enough to give a home for many.
- At the Last Supper, Jesus assures the disciples that "in my Father's house there are many dwelling places" (John 14:2). As the mustard bush provides many dwelling places for birds, the kingdom provides many dwelling places for us. With God's grace, we spend our lives nurturing the mustard bush so that it continues to grow and expand, inviting more and more disciples to flock in its branches.

Question of the Week

How can I nurture the kingdom of God in my community, drawing more and more others to dwell inside it?

Prayer of the Faithful:

Those who are just must be kind, and so we have good ground for hope, as the author of the book of Wisdom put it, that God will be kind to us as we pray for our needs.

- For the Church, that God's mercy may act as yeast, mixed in with the flour that is its members, so that the entire batch may be leavened, rising like dough to proclaim the Good News to the world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For all those who work in the judicial system in this country, that they may work to ensure justice is applied equitably, with kindness and clemency, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For farmers and ranchers and all those who share in producing the food that feeds a hungry world, that they may find reward in the work they do, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those who are quick to condemn others, that they may exercise patience with what appears to be weeds, who may yet grow and bear fruit, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- That we may be like yeast in our workplaces and communities, revealing the kingdom of God by the way we treat each other, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For what else should we pray? 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 justice and kindness, your Son reveals the wonders of your kingdom. Help us be good seed, spreading the Good News and bearing good fruit as children of the kingdom. Grant this and all our prayers through the sower of good seed, Jesus Christ our Lord..

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: p. 176

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.

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:

Graciously be present to your people, we pray, O Lord, and lead those you have imbued with heavenly mysteries to pass from former ways to newness of life.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Concluding Rite:

Final Blessing:

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

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**

Suggested Closing Song: Sent Forth by God's Blessings, #199