



**Westminster Presbyterian Church
Eugene, Oregon**

“At Home”/ Outdoor Worship

(this service will be streamed live on Sunday and recorded and emailed out if you would like to follow along. Watch your email or check the church website for details.)

With the Sacrament of Communion

July 12, 2020

You may use any bread/cracker and juice you have at home. Please take some before you begin to worship to prepare the elements for communion.

Please keep in your prayers:

Arlen Salthouse as he prepares for hip surgery.

(if you have a prayer request you would like added to the At- Home Worship service, please email Brooke office@wpceugene.org.)

Gathering Around God’s Word

Gathering Music—Steve Halberg, piano

Welcome

Welcome to worship. Whether you are gathered together outside at WPC, watching live, watching the video, or reading these words, WELCOME. God’s love and grace unites us through all space and time. May

you all feel God's love, the Spirit's peace and Christ's welcome surrounding you. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Let us gather together to worship God wherever we are!

Call to Worship

We have gathered in many places to worship God today.

We have come seeking comfort, inspiration, grace, and insight.

We come bringing our doubts and concerns but also our faith and hope.

We come knowing that God meets us wherever we are offering us a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Let us come together to worship God.

Prayer of the Day

God of all glory, we thank you for your blessings which surround us each and every day.

Sometimes, especially in the midst of the challenges of life, they are hard for us to see and so we ask you to open our eyes and hearts.

We thank you for each and every person gathered here in sacred space and time today: whether in person or at home.

Forgive us for what we have done or left undone— for those dark places within us.

Let us praise you at all times so we may bear fruit in every season and be satisfied by your goodness, for you, O God, are the source of all growth; your grace abounds forever.

As we hear your word read and proclaimed
today, help us to hear where you may be leading
us. Amen.

The Word

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 65:1-13

Praise is due to you,
O God, in Zion;
and to you shall vows be performed,
O you who answer prayer!
To you all flesh shall come.
When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,
you forgive our transgressions.
Happy are those whom you choose and bring near
to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
your holy temple.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
By your strength you established the mountains;
you are girded with might.
You silence the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.
Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by
your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening
shout for joy.

You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;

you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.
You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

New Testament Reading: Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. 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.’

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Musical Reflection - Steve Halberg, Piano

Reflection

The Rev. Marta Z Ukropina

Before I begin what I will call a “sermonette” this morning (or a shorter sermon), I want to make a few bold statements:

1. It might go without saying, but we are all thankful and grateful to be here after 4 months apart.
2. But as you can see by the amount of people gathered together here, for any of us that are happy and grateful to be here, there are those of you at home who are perhaps saddened that you are not here. Maybe you are content to be safe at home, but you are still upset that things just aren’t “normal.”
3. We are grateful to be here but we are also apprehensive about the future. We read the news and we see conflict, we see unrest and violence, division and illness. We worry.
4. We are all exhausted. In July 2020, everything just seems harder, more challenging, and more uncertain.
5. And most importantly:

This is exactly why we need church—why we need worship and God more than ever. Whether you are here in the church’s backyard, watching this service on a screen, or reading a print copy, **God is with us.**

God is with you.

Today's gospel text is one of my favorites. Many of us probably remember lessons on it from childhood Sunday School classes. There is no arguing that the Parable of the Sower is a very well known text from scripture.

I am going to read verses 1-9 again and this time I invite you to close your eyes to really allow you to focus on the words.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. 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!'

Some times in my life, I have focused more on the types of ground and what I may be: rocky, thorny, a dry path, good soil, etc. This week, when I read this text, I really found myself reflecting on the sower. It is commonly referred to as the Parable of the Sower, not the Parable of the seed or the ground. God is the sower and does not give up. The truth of this parable is that God sows the seeds *everywhere and anywhere*. Because *anywhere and everywhere* are within the scope of God's redemption and care.

Because let's face it: sometimes we are ready to hear God's good news and we are the picture of good soil. Sometimes we are in a barren place filled with rocks and even boulders that become barriers to the good news. We want to hear it, but when trouble comes, we forget, we lose hope, we despair. Sometimes we just don't understand and the seeds fall upon our path, but other things are quick to snatch them away. And sometimes, we hear the word, we want to believe, but there are too many other things competing for our attention. We put God on the back burner—we look to money, or our jobs or our stuff, or other earthly securities to make us happy. They choke out God's word.

Standing outside here today is a great illustration for this story. If I gave you seeds this morning and told you to plant them in the most likely place for growth, almost all of us would take them over to the garden box. It is specially designed to nurture a seeds growth. It is filled with good soil and compost; the fact that it is a raised bed has it set up for success. There are less weeds to choke the seeds, it provides for better drainage and better water retention. The soil is kept warmer and the soil doesn't erode with a heavy rainfall.

The parable is careful to tell us, however, that the sower sowed in all areas.

The sower threw seeds in the bed, on the grass, on the cement, on poor soil, on everyone.

The parable is about a good sower, who is also a high-risk sower. It is risky to throw seeds on the cement. If I was sowing purely for yield, I would NOT sow any on this cement. But the sower threw seed everywhere as if *anywhere could be good soil*.

God loves and cares for us so much and because of that God's seed can sprout and take root anywhere and in any circumstance. Remember that this week as you go

about your life. God is not far off. God is right there throwing seeds of hope, faith, love, peace, change and grace all over. Because *no-where* and *no one* is outside of God's redemption and love. God's seeds are raining down all around you.

How will you receive and nurture those seeds?

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Responding and the Sealing of God's Word

Invitation to the Table

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jesus has invited all of us to share in this mysterious meal. When we share in this meal, we join together with the company of the whole church both on this earth and in the heavenly kingdom. We are united in time and space. It has been a while since we met here together, but God has been with us throughout that time and will continue to be with us. And today we are celebrating in a special, different way as some of us are together in person and others of us are at home. But wherever we are, we are together—united in Christ and upheld by the Spirit.

When we celebrate communion we remember how much Jesus loves us. We remember a baby born in a stable on a very holy night. We remember Jesus teachings, miracles and parables. We remember his life, death and resurrection.

Jesus invites all of us who trust in him to meet him here and share this meal. Remember that you all are precious children of God and you have been called by name.

Great Thanksgiving

Let us pray: Holy God, we praise you. Let the heavens be joyful and the earth be glad. We bless you for creating the whole world, for your promises to your people, and for Jesus Christ in whom your fullness dwells.

Born of Mary, he shares our life. Eating with sinners, he welcomes us. Guiding his children, he leads us. Visiting the sick, he heals us. Dying on the cross, he saves us. Risen from the dead, he gives new life. Living with you, he prays for us.

We lift prayers on this day for the world as it faces a pandemic especially those who are sick and have died and all those in medical professions...

We pray for places overcome by violence, destruction and hate...

We pray for those who are isolated and alone...

For those living in fear...

For those struggling to make ends meet...

For your church..

For leaders...

For all those things that are heavy on our hearts this day,
O Lord hear our prayer....

With thanksgiving we take this bread and this cup and proclaim the death and resurrection of the Lord. Receive our sacrifice of praise. Pour out your Holy Spirit among us that this meal may be a communion in the body and blood of our Lord.

Make us one with Christ and with all who share this feast. Unite us in faith, encourage us with hope, inspire us to love, that we may serve as your faithful disciples until we feast at your table in glory.

We praise you, eternal God, through Christ your Word made flesh, in the holy and life-giving Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Institution

We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread and after giving thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying take and eat: this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, he took the cup, saying, this cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

Breaking of the Bread & the Communion of the People

At this time, we invite you to share communion. If you are alone, take a piece of bread and a sip from the cup as you remember these words:

This is the body of Christ broken for you.

or

The Bread of Life.

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

or

The Cup of Salvation.

If you are with someone in your family, offer the bread/ juice to each other while saying those words.

Take some time to pray or sit in silence with God.

Communion Music— Steve Halberg, piano

Prayer After Communion

God of abundance, with this bread of life and cup of salvation you have united us with Christ, making us one with all your people. Now send us out in the power of your Holy Spirit that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sending of God's Word

Charge and Benediction

May God the Creator bless you. May God the Son, walk with you and may God the Holy Spirit fill your lives with love. Go in Peace. Amen.

Closing Music: Steve Halberg, piano