

“The river of God is full of water and
you provide the people with grain.” AMEN!

“Listen, a sower went out to sow.”

The phrase that launches Jesus’ parable.

And pastures and meadows and valleys
shout and sing together for joy.

Words from today’s psalm.

I’m no farmer so most of the seed parables
that Jesus told get lost for my understanding.

But here’s another parable... one that might
be more about the way pastures,
meadows, and valleys sing together.

Two went out to kayak on a river.

A three hour tour...
what could go wrong?

A single boat with two people in it.

The river was new to them, but thankfully,
the river’s current reflected the paddler’s skills.

For there were gentle rapids that made for
low risk of capsizing and it wasn't
very deep in most places.

There were plenty of opportunities to paddle
but one could also just simply float and
eventually make it to the destination.

If you never paddled, though,
you'd eventually get stuck in the trees
that hung over (or fell) into the water.

So the two occasionally paddled to stay centered.

Along the way the current picked up speed in places
and there were rocks which
made for rapids and hazards.

Some rocks you could see, but others
lurked just below the surface and couldn't
be seen until the paddlers were there upon it.

Speaking of the paddlers, if
they didn't communicate they'd find
themselves contradicting each other and
that made navigating the kayak
more difficult than necessary and
could even put themselves into

unnecessary jeopardy.

On one particular rapid, a paddler wanted to go into the swifter flowing part of the river and the other reluctantly agreed.

The path looked clear and they paddled through it until one of those rocks that could not be seen caught the bottom of the kayak and lodged it there.

Kayak and paddlers stood still while the water kept flowing.

Pushing on the rocks with paddles; shifting and scooting the lower half of their bodies... none of it worked.

Other kayaks passed by either watching the two stuck or giving them a sort of “respect” by acting like they didn’t notice them.

So after a few minutes the two realized that they needed to work together to move past this impediment.

The one in the front leaned forward to put weight into the bow of the kayak and

the other stepped out of the boat
just enough for the weight to lighten
and the kayak raised itself off
of the rock.

Then pushing themselves back into the vessel
it continued to float down the river to find
what would come next.

Let anyone with ears listen. (Pause)

“Hear then the parable of the kayak.”

As we float or paddle the river of life,
we must be in community/partnership
with one another.

Communication is critical.

If we do not communicate then the journey of life
is harder than it has to be.

And life is hard enough as it is for
there are hidden dangers that lurk beneath
the surface like boulders under the water.

Yet, even with the best communications,
there will be inevitable dangers, pitfalls,
and situations where we get stuck and

need help or we may be the one
who passes by others who need help.

Will we “respectfully” pretend to not
see them and do nothing?

Most, if not everyone has done that,
but it doesn't mean we have to repeat it
today or tomorrow.

A word of encouragement...
a prayer said for them...
a helping hand offered.

For the next time it could be you
stuck on the rock, what then?

For if one is blessed to live long enough
one will surely find themselves bottoming out
in one way or another and

needing to find ways to scoot and push and work
to get going again.

Even if you are with only one other person...
with the current of the river,
it is possible to find the way out.

The river is God and the kayak is a vessel

like the church.

A community of faith that holds in it
people of different abilities,
varieties of spiritual gifts, and
varied economic blessings or challenges.

As for the one who remains connected
to community, growth, liberation, and
giving aid to the less fortunate deepens
our whole life. (Pause)

Does God's approach make more sense ecologically?

For me it does.

For some it is with fishing metaphors,
others with gardening, but for me
a river does the trick.

There's a beauty and a danger in a river.

There's life and surprise.

A river does not mind diversity and the water,
mixed with energy and action,
produces a flourishing and abundant
landscape where growth and life
and adventure exists.

The kayak is the church that it carried by the river
it needs at least two people.

In the parable of the sower,
and in my experiences,
it doesn't help for the preacher to tell us
that we need to be better soil.

It may be true, but it never inspires.

In the parable of the kayak, it doesn't help
for the preacher to tell us to be better paddlers.

It might be true, but you might be struggling.

Sometimes we are cracked, rocky, and hard soil.

And sometimes we are tired paddlers,
who forget to communicate, or drop
the oar altogether and become
unable to help ourselves or others.

For these, we are reminded that
there is a God who is abundant.

There's a God who completely lacks self-respect.

A God who lavishly wastes good seed

upon all varieties of soil.

A God with currents that move us.

To this we give our thanks and praise
for the indiscriminate casting of seeds and
for the self-emptying love poured out
upon us all.

One of the problems with Christianity is that
it is so easy to think God raised Jesus
for a select few.

There's no grace in that belief.

God doesn't push us along or pour out
forgiving grace because we deserve it.

It's all done because this God can't
stop loving humanity.

No matter what we do, God can't stop
loving the world.

And when we know this truth and experience
it in our own lives.

If we live it out every week at this table,
where everyone is welcome and fed

then we experience grace,
and with God's help, we might even
show grace to others.

What a harvest that would be.

AMEN!