

## Worship at Home Guide



**November 1, 2020**

**31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### **Gathering Question/Gathering Music**

#### **Opening Sentences            Matthew 5:3**

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

#### **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, you created the heavens and the earth, and humankind in your image. Teach us to discern your hand in all your works and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **Hymn #326            "For All the Saints"<sup>1</sup>**

For all the saints, who from their labors rest, who thee by faith,  
believe the world confessed, thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest, Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Thou was their rock, their fortress and their might; thou, Lord,  
their captain in the well-fought fight;  
thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light, Alleluia! Alleluia!  
O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle; they in glory shine;  
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia! Alleluia!  
And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long, steals, on the ear, the distant triumph song, and  
hearts are brave again, and arms are strong. Alleluia! Alleluia!  
From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast, through gates of pearl streams in the  
countless host, singing to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Alleluia! Alleluia!

<sup>1</sup>Public Domain. The broad and sweeping tune by Ralph Vaughn Williams, with which this hymn by William Washamis so closely identified, was created to be sung during a reverent, but dramatic, processional at the beginning of an All Saints' Day Service.

## [A Time of Remembrance](#)

### **Prayer of Confession**

Jesus said: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Trusting in God's grace, let us offer to God our prayers...

Jesus said: Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

In the name of Jesus the Christ, receive God's mercy as we are forgiven! Amen.

### **Hymn "Open the Eyes of My Heart"<sup>2</sup>**

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, open the eyes of my heart; I want to see you, I want to see you. (Repeat) To see you high and lifted up, shining in the light of your glory. Pour out your power and love as we sing, "Holy, holy, holy." Holy, holy, holy. Holy, holy, holy, Holy, holy, holy, I want to see you.

<sup>2</sup>Text/Music Paul Baloche ©1997 Integrity's Hosanna! Music reprinted with permission CCLI #120092. All rights reserved.

### **Scripture/Meditation**

[Matthew 13:1-23](#)

Anthem

### **The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

-Invitation

-Words of Institution

-Sharing of the Bread and Cup

- Prayer following Communion

### **Hymn "God, Be The Love To Search and Keep Me"<sup>3</sup>**

God, be the love to search and keep me; God be the prayer to move my voice; God, be the strength to now uphold me: O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.

<sup>3</sup>Text/Music © 2004 This Here Music. Reprinted with permission. ONE LICENSE #A-716826 All rights reserved.

### **Sharing of the Peace**

Sharing Jesus' invitation to his disciples:

Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

— Resources from the *Book of Common Worship and Glory to God Hymnal*, PCUSA

## Scripture Lesson    Matthew 13:1-23

### *The Parable of the Sower*

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 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!”

Then the disciples came and asked him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” He answered, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.’ With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:

‘You will indeed listen, but never understand,  
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.  
For this people’s heart has grown dull,  
and their ears are hard of hearing,  
and they have shut their eyes;  
so that they might not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
and I would heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell 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. 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 the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world 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 understand it, who is indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

### **Questions for Reflection and Discernment**

What question(s) would you like to ask Jesus about this teaching?

### **Interpretation of Matthew 13:1-23**

In every culture figurative language, ranging from simple analogies to complex stories and myths, is employed as an effective tool for communicating ideas. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus has already used such language on numerous occasions (17:3-5; 7:24-27; 9:15; 12:29). None of these, however, has Matthew identified as parable ("parable"). The Greek word derives from a verb meaning "set side by side," that is, compare. Behind Matthew's Greek stand the Hebrew Scriptures, where the word *mashal*, while likewise representing many kinds of figurative language, was also used for enigmatic speech; it often designated a statement whose meaning was not immediately apparent. *Mashal* can also be understood as like a riddle, intended to tease the mind into insight rather than to communicate a simple idea by means of an illustration. It is apparent that Matthew wishes "parables" in verse 3 to recall to the readers this Hebrew word and its use. In Chapter 13, Matthew has collected seven or eight parables (depending on whether 13:52 is counted as a parable), combining Mark's smaller collection (Mark 4:1-34) with parables from his other sources. This not the only collection of parables in Matthew; three are grouped together in 21:28-22:14, and another three in 24:45-25:30). The parables of Chapter 13 constitute Jesus' response to the rejection he has experienced from "this generation" in the preceding two chapters. They provide an explanation for the unresponsiveness of his contemporaries, who are here represented by the crowds. The parables also contribute to the further development of the divide amongst the audience between those who are for and those who are against Jesus.

The disciples' question, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" alerts the reader that the sower and the parables to follow are not simple comparisons but examples of wisdom. For instance, "the secrets of the kingdom" are not taught but revealed. They are presented in the veiled speech of parables to the crowds who are unable to appropriate them and are explained to the disciples who, because of their commitment to following Jesus, are capable of comprehension. "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given": it is not a matter of human intellect and natural insight but of divine revelation.

Modern study of Jesus' parables has produced two important conclusions: 1) many of the parables have been reinterpreted for the post-Easter situation of the church; 2) originally the parables were not allegorical but were intended to make one point only. One of the problems concerning the reinterpretation of the parable as we have it in verses 18-23 is the confusion it manifests regarding the allegorical significance of the seed. In verse 19 the seed refers unambiguously to "the word of the kingdom" which is sown in human hearts; here people who do not "understand" the word are represented by the soil beside the path. This inclines readers to treat the parable as an allegory about four different soils, only one of which is truly receptive of the implanted seed. In the succeeding verses, however, "that which is sown" refers to different kinds of people. The general tenor of the message is clear: those who receive the word of the kingdom and understand it, that is appropriate it with commitment, will be able to survive temptation and tribulation.

—from *Matthew, A Bible Commentary For Teaching and Preaching*, Douglas R.A. Hare

### Meditation on Matthew 13:1-23

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Blessings in God's name on this 22nd Sunday after Pentecost, or the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time. We are coming to the end of the most extended time in the church year, the time referred to as Ordinary Time, so named not because it

is a time of low expectations but because it is a time that does not have a holiday, like Christmas or Easter, or the context of a specifically devoted season, such as Advent or Lent. It is a season of growth and the liturgical color is green. For the remaining Sundays of Ordinary Time before the First Sunday of Advent on November 29th, we will be reading and reflecting on the teaching sections from the Gospel of Matthew.

The third teaching section could be entitled “Teaching in Parables,” and the first parable shared is the Sower. According to one commentator, “Parables are stories describing situations in everyday life which, as Jesus used them, convey a spiritual meaning. Jesus used this method of teaching because:

- a) it gave vivid, memorable expression to his teaching;
- b) it led those who heard to reflect on his words and bear responsibility for their decision to accept or oppose his claim;
- c) it probably reduced specific grounds for contention by hostile listeners.” “And Jesus told them many things in parables, saying...”.

Jesus is portrayed teaching next to the sea, surrounded again by a great crowd as well as his disciples. Picture yourself amongst the crowd. I invite you to do this by remembering a time in your life when you have stood on a beach of some kind. What body of water was it by? Which compass directions could your eyes take in? Who was with you? Is this a familiar place or was it a one-time or uncommon place to find yourself? Whatever the location, take yourself back there now in your mind. Take in what you remember seeing, including what you noticed when you lifted your eyes and looked beyond what was right front of you. What did your eyes see? What did your heart and mind take in?

Whether or not you have been able to engage in this exercise, I invite you to re-enter the story of the Sower. Jesus, sitting in the boat on the water, might have well lifted his eyes to the hillside that would have risen up from the lake and noticed a farmer sowing seeds. The story is challenging for us in part because of the challenges that the seeds encounter in ground that has not been prepared the way modern agriculture practices.

In Jesus’ day, the farmer would carry a bag of seeds on their hip, reaching in to get a handful, before broadcasting the seeds in a sweeping fashion while walking. This agricultural act is the same no matter what era. From there Jesus goes on to picture what many in his hearing would have been able to easily understand. As the seed is broadcast, some falls on the paths where the soil is too dense for the seed to enter the soil. Some seed falls on rocky ground, where the soil is thin and the soil is warm, allowing the seeds to germinate quickly but the lack of a deep root structure causes the seeds to fail. Yet other seeds fall into soil that has potential but is also filled with other seeds, whose germination chokes out the seeds. Finally, some seed is cast on “good soil” and the seed germinates and is harvested plentifully: three to six to ten times the average harvest in Palestine.

Jesus’ attention next turns to the disciples, who ask him why he speaks in parables (an affirmation of their difficulty). Jesus says he does because the disciples have been given the ability to understand God’s way and word through them. Jesus acknowledges that not everyone can understand (quoting Isaiah 6:9-10) but affirms that the disciples are not among them. An

interpretation of the parable is given next, which speaks to the meaning of the parable understanding the “seed” as the “word of the kingdom,” with the “soil” representing different “persons” who hear the word and respond in different ways.

On an ordinary day (“that same day”), Jesus engages those who have ears to hear and hearts and minds willing to understand with an ordinary story. The parable of the Sower begins and ends with the same word: “Listen!” Once again, we have an inclusion, a repletion in this case of a word that frames the body of the story. Matthew wants us to hear—literally and metaphorically—Jesus’ teaching first and foremost by listening to what he says.

When we listen today, what do we hear? It is challenging in part because of the familiarity of the story. Is it easy to understand? Apparently, the disciples did not think so, for they ask Jesus to explain the story to them. The community Matthew writes to, a community seeking with its words and its ways witnessing to what God had—and was doing—in the person of Jesus through the Spirit, would have appreciated the explanation.

And yet, as an example of parabolic teaching—and we can assume the example of parabolic teaching according to its placement as the first parable Matthew shares—the story is also extraordinary. A common practice has uncommon (extraordinary!) results in the size of the harvest, for instance. While the seeds that fall on the path do not have the opportunity to germinate, they do provide food for the birds, creatures that Jesus equally appreciates. Those that fell on rocky ground (note how many words are used to describe this situation as compared to the others) will provide growth that will help nourish the undernourished soil. The third example of the seed is a reminder that there are other “seeds” out and about already in the soil. Finally, the fourth “seed” finds “good soil” which results in a plentiful harvest. So, what to you make of this parable once you have “listened” to it again?

Listening is more than an act of hearing; it is a means by which learning can be embodied. Taking an illustration out of every day first-century Palestinian life, a life that was dominated by agriculture as most societies have been at one point or another, Jesus invites his listeners to hear out of a familiar context rather than one that is unfamiliar. Given how most of us are not integrated in an agricultural context, it might be more challenging to hear and learn as we listen. Matthew understands the parable as speaking to the truth of the kingdom of God. Whether we understand the seeds as the word and the soil to be human hearers or not, for the disciples, and thus for us, the parable is to be heard as God’s commitment to consistently sow hope, even amidst despair, with the understanding that God’s promise will be abundantly fulfilled. The Gospel of John records Jesus saying: “I came so that (God’s children) may have life and have it abundantly.”

Amen.

## CELEBRATION OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE SAINTS OF GOD

Friends and fellow disciples of Jesus Christ, greetings;  
In every age, God raises up men and women to live and die in faith.  
It is truly right and our greatest joy to give God thanks and praise.  
Therefore, we praise God for saints and martyrs, for the faithful  
in every age who have lived their life as witnesses to God's grace.

Surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, we pray for the fulfillment of God's promise,  
affirming, In faith, O God, we seek your grace.

O Lord, strengthen us all the day long until the shadows lengthen and the  
evening comes and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.

We now join our voices together to remember:

Bill Ewing	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Danelle Kristal	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Joyce Osborne	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Chuck Steuwe	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Corenia Franklin	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Elsa Yakel	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Rita McDonald	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Jim Wallace	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Jean Crockett	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Betty Kiely	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
John Ostergren	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.
Stephen Dietz	In faith, O God, we seek your grace.

### Unison Prayer

O God, before whom generations rise and pass away,  
we give you thanks for all of these servants who,  
having lived this life in faith, now live eternally with you.  
We praise you for the gift of their lives, for all in them that was  
good, kind, and faithful, and for the grace you gave them.  
As we continue to live with the memory of their lives lived among us,  
we thank you that you have welcomed them and will care for them  
until we are reunited once again.  
We pray O God in the strong name of Jesus through  
the passion and purpose of the Holy Spirit.

Amen