

*From the Pews, Anna Wallace Clark and Scott Clark*

Whether we realize it or not, each of us has a self-image. We see ourselves in some way—smart, kind, well-intentioned, misunderstood, meticulous, thoughtful, motivated, empathetic, or shrewd. We all can pick adjectives that describe ourselves. This is the “I” we think of when we think of ourselves. The “I” that thinks, dreams, talks, feels, and believes. The “I” that no one else knows fully. And as that “I” we are skilled in seeing the positive attributes and shortcomings of others, but we have no reliable lens with which to view ourselves objectively.

In today’s Gospel Lesson, Jesus tells the Parable of the Sower. In it, Jesus describes a farmer planting seeds and of a progression of success of these labors. First, there was the seed that fell along the path and produced nothing. Next, there was the seed that fell on the rocky ground and started to produce but then stopped. Then, there was the seed that fell among the thorns sprang up but was soon choked out. None of these three turned out to be of any value to the farmer. It is not until the seed fell on good soil that it brought forth fruit.

Jesus goes on to say that in the parable the good soil represents the one who hears the word and understands it and bears fruit. That’s me, right? In the parable, surely, I, as the Christian, am the good soil.

If I could look objectively at myself, I would find that there are teachings of the Bible that have failed to take root with me completely – just like the seed upon the path. Or I would likely find that there are lessons that strike a chord with me and inspire me to want to do things right and in a Christian way. I might find that I pay lip service to these things, but doing the right, Christian things just gets choked out by competing interests and hard realities. Maybe, I am not the good soil, or at least not so all the time and everywhere.

Today, our world, our country, our society, and our church are dealing with issues of racism, inequality, justice, and equal opportunity. Each of us maintain our particular self-image with respect to these issues. I am against racism and inequality. I am for justice and equal opportunity for all. Those are very easy statements to make on the cover of a church bulletin.

It is harder to take actions behind those words in the world, the country, and our society. Yet, it should be easy for the “I” that is a Christian member of Westminster Presbyterian Church to do so. That “I” is willing to challenge my self-image and find hypocrisy, to help the seed of change put down sustaining roots, and to beat back the thorns that would choke out real progress.

That’s the challenge then – to take that “I” out of the church and into the world, the country and our society and be the good soil.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, July 12, 2020 | online, 10:00a | Sixth Sunday after Pentecost



Prayer of Preparation

“How necessary it is to cultivate a spirit of joy. It is a psychological truth that the physical acts of reverence and devotion make one feel devout. The courteous gesture increases one’s respect for others. To act lovingly is to begin to feel loving, and certainly to act joyfully brings joy to others... I believe we are called to the duty of delight.”  
- Dorothy Day

Gathering and Preparing for God’s Word

Prelude *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* Hustad

Welcome and Announcements  
Sentences of Scripture, from Psalm 119:105, 112  
God’s word is a lamp to our feet  
and a light to our path.  
God’s decrees are our heritage forever;  
they bring true joy to our hearts.  
May we ever incline our hearts to the Lord.

Hymn #32 *I Sing the Mighty Power of God* ELLACOMBE  
**See hymn sheet.**

Morning Prayers  
The Lord’s Prayer

**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 debts  
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.**

Anthem *I Will Lift Mine Eyes* Helvey

Hearing God’s Word

Prayer for Illumination  
Old Testament Lesson, *Genesis 25:21-27*  
Message for Children  
Gospel Lesson, *Matthew 13:1-9*  
Homily *“Good Soil”*  
Response *In the Bulb There Is a Flower* Sleeth

Responding to God’s Word

Affirmation of Faith, *The Nicene Creed*  
**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**  
**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.**  
**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again 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.**  
**We 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 worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**  
**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication  
Hymn #308 *O God in Whom All Life Begins* NOEL  
**See hymn sheet.**

Charge and Benediction  
Postlude *Trumpet Tune in C Major* Johnson

Leading Worship **this Morning**

Ben Dorr, *preaching*  
Lauren Slingerland, Mary Kathleen Duncan, *liturgists*  
Tony Atkins, *lay reader*  
Nancy Smith, *organist*  
Katie Knauer, Diana Dailey, Derek Pitman, Mark Kemp, *vocalists*

# 32 I Sing the Mighty Power of God

1 I sing the might-y power of God that made the moun-tains rise,  
 2 I sing the good-ness of the Lord who filled the earth with food.  
 3 There's not a plant or flower be-low but makes thy glo-ries known.

that spread the flow-ing seas a-broad and built the loft-y  
 God formed the crea-tures through the Word, and then pro-nounced them  
 And clouds a-rise, and tem-pests blow, by or-der from thy

skies. I sing the wis-dom that or-dained the sun to rule the day.  
 good. Lord, how thy won-ders are dis-played, wher-e'er I turn my eye,  
 throne, while all that bor-rows life from thee is ev-er in thy care,

The moon shines full at God's com-mand, and all the stars o-bey.  
 if I sur-vey the ground I tread, or gaze up-on the sky!  
 and ev-ery-where that we can be, thou, God, art pres-ent there.

With minimal revision this text brings together six of the eight four-line stanzas in an 18th-century hymn written for children and originally headed "Praise for Creation and Providence." The anonymous German tune provides a fitting sense of breadth and wonder.

# O God in Whom All Life Begins 308

1 O God in whom all life be-gins, who births the seed to fruit,  
 2 U-nite in mu-tual min-is-try our minds and hands and hearts  
 3 Through tears and laugh-ter, grief and joy, en-large our trust and care;

be-stow your bless-ing on our lives; here let your love find root.  
 that we may have the grace to seek the power your peace im-parts.  
 so bind us in com-mu-ni-ty that we may risk and dare.

Bring forth in us the Spir-it's gifts of pa-tience, joy, and peace;  
 So let our var-ied gifts com-bine to glo-ri-fy your Name  
 Be with us when we gath-er here to wor-ship, sing, and pray;

de-liv-er us from numb-ing fear, and grant our faith in-crease.  
 that in all things by word and deed we may your love pro-claim.  
 then send us forth in power and faith to live the words we say.

Although it was written for the installation of a pastor, this text is really about the mutual ministry shared by all members of a worshipping community, both when they are gathered and when they go forth into the world. The tune used here may have Christmas associations for some.