



SIXTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST

July 12, 2020

St. Stephen's is a Christian community in the making.

At the intersection of what was and what will be, we invite you to gather with us around prayer, food, and the simple conviction that nothing is wasted in God's economy.

All are welcome at St. Stephen's.

Whether you come with great faith or great doubt,
regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation or marital status,
whatever your financial status or housing situation –
we hope you can find a home with us
as we explore together what it means to follow Jesus.

Ministry Team

Priest & Lead Pastor	The Reverend Jeff Potter jeff@ststephensmaple.ca (416) 569-4263
Honorary Assistant	The Reverend Mary Pataki mary@ststephensmaple.ca
Director of Music	Scott Weidler scott@ststephensmaple.ca
Pastor to Children and Families	Becky Potter becky@ststephensmaple.ca
Pastor of Outreach	Karen Shea karen@ststephensmaple.ca



ST. STEPHEN'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH, MAPLE

Preparation

*Whether you participate in worship in a small group or alone,
know that you are joined together with the whole St. Stephen's community
and the wider church as we offer our prayers and praise to God.*

*Consider setting a candle or two out in the space you're using for worship,
as a reminder of God's presence. Light the candles, and say:*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.

Almighty God,
to you all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Seek the Lord

Seek the Lord while he wills to be found;
call upon him when he draws near.
Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the evil ones their thoughts;
And let them turn to the Lord, and he will have compassion,
and to our God, for he will richly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
For as rain and snow fall from the heavens
and return not again, but water the earth,
Bringing forth life and giving growth,
seed for sowing and bread for eating,
So is my word that goes forth from my mouth;
it will not return to me empty;
But it will accomplish that which I have purposed,
and prosper in that for which I sent it. *(Isaiah 55.6–11)*

Collect of the Day

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless
until they find their rest in you.
May we find peace in your service,
and in the world to come, see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 25:19-34

These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is to be this way, why do I live?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples born of you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,
the elder shall serve the younger.”

When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” (Therefore he was called Edom.) Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Psalms 119:105-112

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light upon my path.

I have sworn and am determined to keep your righteous judgments.

I am deeply troubled; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your word.

Accept, O LORD, the willing tribute of my lips, and teach me your judgments.

My life is always in danger, yet I do not forget your teaching.

The wicked have set a trap for me, but I have not strayed from your commandments.

Your decrees are my inheritance forever; truly, they are the joy of my heart.

I have applied my heart to fulfill your statutes forever and to the end.

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

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!”

“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.”

Reflection – Jeff+

*The following reflection can be watched online [by clicking here](#)
or can be read in full below.*

*Please feel free to engage with either or both options,
and know that whatever you choose
will enable you to fully participate in the worship of our community.*

Written in Hebrew, the term that is usually translated The LORD (in all caps) or Yahweh is actually a collection of characters called the tetragrammaton (which sounds like a great name for a Bond villain, or death-metal band). In Hebrew tradition, the tetragrammaton (isn't it fun to say?) is mysterious and unpronounceable. But, of course, that hasn't stopped us from speculating. My favourite theory is that the characters – yodh, heh, vav, heh – actually mimic the sound of breathing. The idea is that the name of God is unknowingly echoed by every living thing in beautiful, constant rhythm whether we know it or not. For, as the psalms say, even the fields and everything in them have the capacity for jubilation, and the trees to sing for joy.

Of course, it's all speculation. But what a marvellous thought. And how fitting to think that all of creation is saturated with the goodness of God, whether we know it or not.

Our gospel reading today takes us to the Parable of the Sower – a vitally important parable that is recorded in all of the synoptic Gospels, and which seems to set the tone for all of the other parables. It's sort of the gateway to understanding what Jesus is doing with this particular way of teaching.

There may be a temptation to think that this familiar old parable is simple, that the disciples didn't really need Jesus to explain it. Or, even worse, a temptation to focus on what Jesus has to say about different kinds of soil, and become preoccupied and worried about our own spiritual fertility.

But, this isn't the parable of the different types of ground. This is the Parable of the Sower.

The ground matters, to be sure, and we ought to give some thought to our own trust, receptiveness, and faith. But to focus there is to miss much of the point.

Because the point is the extravagance, the jubilation, the foolishness of the sower. Tossing precious seed here and there with no concern for waste, as if there's always more than enough to go around. As if the capacity for any kind of growth is far more important than conservation efforts.

And if we are to imagine that the seed in this parable is the Word of God – the same Word that breathes life into all things in the beginning of creation, the same Word that is Jesus himself – then the parable becomes even deeper. An image emerges of a world saturated with God.

Which is, above all else, cause for joy. What an extraordinary thought – that God inhabits and animates and deeply loves all of our spaces.

But it’s also challenging and profoundly mysterious. Which is why the fact that the disciples are puzzled by this parable isn’t strange, or a mark of their ineptness. They’re puzzled because Jesus launches into this kind of teaching without any introduction or useful preamble, and he presents an image so strange and extravagant that it’s hard to make heads or tails of it.

And it still is. Even with the benefit of 2000 years of Christian reflection and speculation, this parable remains deeply mysterious. It seems to suggest that the seed of the Word, the very stuff of the Kingdom of God, is literally everywhere. Which suggests that we in the church might not have any exclusive claim to own the Kingdom. Joy, hope, growth and wholeness of being seem to animate this whole ecosystem, without concern for wasted efforts, or any particular need for a team of highly educated experts to prepare the terrain. All the same, different outcomes result from the seed being sown all over the place, and all of these outcomes seem to have to do with the extent to which the seed is left alone. It is when it is the least interfered with that it is the most productive, although even then the fruit that it yields is unpredictable and variable in its outcome – consistent only in the continued multiplication of abundance.

So where does that leave us, other than firmly in the realm of speculation?

I think we’re called to let the parable work on us. To marvel at it, and to let our imaginations wander down mysterious paths.

And I think we’re called to trust. These parables of Jesus are descriptive, not prescriptive. They don’t so much demand things of us as they invite us to trust in a mysterious, joyful, abundant ecosystem that is held within the hand of the God who loves us.

So breathe deep. It may just be that, even without knowing it, you’re playing a small part in an endlessly complex symphony of creatures proclaiming the glory of God, who scatters seed in every nook and cranny.

Apostles’ Creed

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

*As a community of people made one in Christ, we offer our prayers to God for ourselves,
our community, and the world. Feel free to adapt these prayers as you like,
and to make use of the spaces indicated to add your own prayers and petitions.*

Let us pray together to the Lord, saying, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Lord, hear our prayer.

Loving God, we thank you for your many gifts to us,
for the love which brings us together,
for the earth which provides for our needs,
for the new life you have given us in Jesus Christ,
(for . . .).

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray to you for our Christian family (especially for . . .)
and for grace to grow in your love.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray to you for our world, for all its cares and needs,
and for all who lead us and care for us, (especially . . .)

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray to you for those in need, for the sick and the lonely,
for the hurt and the frightened, and for those who live without hope (especially . . .).

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those we love who have died, that you will surround them with your care and love
(especially . . .)

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for one another, asking you to bless us, our friends, and relatives.
Bless the places where we work, and bless our home and our life together.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Let us now name before God those for whom we offer our personal prayers.

*A period of silence is kept as we offer silent prayer
and listen for the leading of the Spirit.*

Let us remember before God our selfish ways, the things we have done wrong,
the sorrows we have caused, the love we have not shown.

Most merciful God, forgive us our sins against you and against each other.

**Strengthen us to overcome our weaknesses,
that we may live in love as you would have us live,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.**

Lord, you have called us to serve you.

**Grant that we may walk in your presence
and experience the present truth of resurrection:
your love in our hearts, your truth in our minds,
your strength in our wills, until, at the end of our journey,
we know the joy of our homecoming and the welcome of your embrace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,
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.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

May joy and nothing less find us on our way.
May we be blessed and be a blessing.
And may light guide us, and countless others, all the way home.
Amen.

May we go in peace, have courage, hold on to what is good,
return no one evil for evil, strengthen the faint-hearted,
support the weak, help the suffering, honor everyone, love and serve God,
rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.
Thanks be to God.

MUSIC

Following are several hymns that you may want to sing and/or listen to.
Music and texts, as well as sample links, are provided.

Good Soil

Lord, let my heart be good soil, o-pen to the seed of your word.

Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is un-der-stood.

When my heart is hard, break the stone a - way. When my heart is cold,

warm it with the day. When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.


Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.

Text: Handt Hanson, b. 1950
Music: GOOD SOIL, Handt Hanson
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev8ufz4G3l0>


I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say




1 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Come un - to me and rest;
2 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Be - hold, I free - ly give
3 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "I am this dark world's light;



lay down, O wea - ry one, lay down your head up - on my breast."
the liv - ing wa - ter, thirst - y one; stoop down and drink and live."
look un - to me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright."



I came to Je - sus as I was, so wea - ry, worn, and sad;
I came to Je - sus, and I drank of that life - giv - ing stream;
I looked to Je - sus, and I found in him my star, my sun;



I found in him a rest-ing-place, and he has made me glad.
my thirst was quenched, my soul re - vived, and now I live in him.
and in that light of life I'll walk till trav-'ling days are done.

Text: Horatius Bonar, 1808–1889
Music: KINGSFOLD, English folk tune

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUVCpF8-VuE>

For the Fruit of all Creation



1 For the fruit of all cre - a - tion, thanks be to God.
2 In the just re - ward of la - bor, God's will is done.
3 For the har - vests of the Spir - it, thanks be to God.



For these gifts to ev - 'ry na - tion, thanks be to God.
In the help we give our neigh-bor, God's will is done.
For the good we all in - her - it, thanks be to God.



For the plow - ing, sow - ing, reap - ing, si - lent growth while we are sleep - ing,
In our world - wide task of car - ing for the hun - gry and de - spair - ing,
For the won - ders that as - tound us, for the truths that still con - found us,



fu - ture needs in earth's safe - keep - ing, thanks be to God.
in the har - vests we are shar - ing, God's will is done.
most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000
Music: AR HYD Y NOS, Welsh traditional
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbBUFSOkbDM>

For other hymns, check out:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGLVPtOYRgM>



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10103 Keele Street
Maple, Ontario, L6A 3Y8
416-569-4263
www.ststephensmaple.ca