



EIGHTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST
July 26, 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
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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

O God,
the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy,
increase and multiply upon us your mercy,
that with you as our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal,
that we lose not the things eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

First Reading: Genesis 29:15-28

Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?’ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah’s eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.’ Laban said, ‘It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.’ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.’ So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?’ Laban said, ‘This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me for another seven years.’ Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

Psalm 105:1-11, 45b

Give thanks to the LORD and call upon God’s name; make known the deeds of the LORD among the peoples.

Sing to the LORD, sing praises, and speak of all God’s marvelous works.

Glory in God’s holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

Search for the strength of the LORD; continually seek God’s face.

Remember the marvels God has done, the wonders and the judgments of God’s mouth,

O offspring of Abraham, God’s servant, O children of Jacob, God’s chosen ones.

The LORD is our God, whose judgments prevail in all the world,

who has always been mindful of the covenant, the promise made for a thousand generations:

the covenant made with Abraham, the oath sworn to Isaac,

which God established as a statute for Jacob, an everlasting covenant for Israel,

saying, “To you will I give the land of Canaan to be your allotted inheritance.” Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

‘For your sake we are being killed all day long;

we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’

He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.’

‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

‘Have you understood all this?’ They answered, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’

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.*

What does God’s engagement with us and our world look like?

Seed scattered haphazardly, in every nook and cranny of an unkept field. Wheat and weeds growing side by side under the watchful eye of a farmer deeply invested in the wellbeing of the whole field. A tiny mustard seed, lost and buried in the earth only to spring up into something big and beautiful and life-giving. A tiny measure of yeast which leavens enough dough for even a commercial baker. A treasure forgotten in a dusty corner of a field. A pearl that someone stumbled upon. A drag net, that captures everything in its path.

Mysterious, but dependable. Distinctive, and yet present everywhere. Domestic, and also extraordinary.

For three weeks now, we’ve been immersed in the strange and compelling parables of Jesus. (And, fear not, the lectionary will be moving us on to other matters next week). Rich with imagery and pregnant with partially hidden meaning, these parables are an invitation to wonder. It’s important, I think, to remember to approach these parables with trust in the goodness of God, and with inquisitive minds. The more questions we find in these parables, the better off we are.

What might it mean that, in each one of these parables, the work of the Kingdom seems to be everywhere? There seems to be no corner of the story that isn’t part of the conspiracy.

What about the fact that the people in these parables are only changed after they encounter something that they weren’t expecting? The Kingdom that Jesus speaks of seems to be something that happens to us and around us, not particularly because of us.

And what about the counter-intuitive trust that is on display in these stories, often in ways that seem foolish. Letting weeds flourish, re-hiding treasure so that you can buy an entire field, tossing valuable seed here and there without care or attention. Strange things indeed.

The final image that Jesus uses is of a net – but more specifically a drag-net. If we leave aside the environmental concerns we might have about this style of fishing, it’s most notable because it is indiscriminate. Every little thing that it comes upon is captured by it. Every manner of fish, and also all kinds of things beside. Not even the fish would be in a position to speculate about what kind of harvest this kind of fishing is looking for.

In a time of great uncertainty, in a time of transition, in a time when a great many of the things that we had come to depend on now seem to be debatable, I think there is great value in letting ourselves meditate on these parables. The details are strange, the values seem to be counter-intuitive, and the results are often not what we would expect. But, Jesus insists, God's presence abides and God's purpose is accomplished.

We would do well to wonder at the strangeness of it all, recognizing that God's ways are not the same as our ways. The structure and order that we long for can be positive, but can also close us off to possibilities that we had never imagined. And the sense of fear or anxiety that can come from being untethered to the usual patterns and systems that hold our lives together can only be remedied by faith.

Which is why, I think, St. Paul writes that "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

If this whole crazy world is God's, and if God loves so much as to give himself to us as completely as possible in the person of Jesus, and if not even death can upend our hope, then there just might be room for faith and trust to abide. Then the strange and confusing parables of Jesus can be an invitation to awe and wonder, without needing a definitive answer.

If nothing else, these parables describe a movement that is not ours to own. And, which will work out for good in the end, completely irrespective of our efforts.

So may good seed be scattered in our hearts. May we be caught up in a great big net that we can no more understand than escape. May we marvel at the all-encompassing strangeness of it all, and learn to see the face of Jesus at work in every unexpected corner.

And when we're tempted to reach for an answer, or to desire certainty in the midst of swirling change, may we instead discover peace and trust and faith. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are God's. And thank goodness for that.

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.

Seek Ye First



1 Seek ye___ first the___ king - dom of God

2 We do not live by___ bread___ a - lone,

3 Ask and it shall be___ giv - en un - to you,



and God's___ right - eous - ness,___

but by___ ev - 'ry___ word___

seek and___ you shall___ find;___



and all these things shall be add - ed un - to you.

that pro - ceeds from the mouth of___ God.

knock and the door shall be o - pened un - to you.



Al - le - lu, al - le - lu - ia.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LMQfOp9w8k>

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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