



**ST. PAUL**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
ANAMOSA, IOWA

CREATIVELY CONNECT • INTENTIONALLY GROW • JOYFULLY SERVE

**July 12, 2020**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after**  
**Pentecost**

**Prayer Concerns:** For Betty Willimack, Fred Williams; Denny Oltmann, Troy Lyon, and Leslie Swartz (niece of Jan Allaire); for all facing issues from the corona virus—sickness or social isolation. (send prayer requests to stpaulanamosa@gmail.com; include your name, prayer recipient name, and family relationship)

**Introduction:** God's word is like the rain that waters the earth and brings forth vegetation. It is also like the sower who scatters seed indiscriminately. Our lives are like seeds sown in the earth. Even from what appears to be little, dormant, or dead, God promises a harvest. At the Lord's table we are fed with the bread of life, that we may bear fruit in the world.

**Service in Wapsi-Ana Park:** Weather permitting, an outdoor worship experience will be offered at 10 A.M. **Bring your lawn chairs** for versatile social distancing. **Notice change of Location for both the Service and the Annual Meeting!**

**The ALY Board of Directors** has decided to suspend its summer sack lunch program for 2020, due to Covid 19 concerns. The Anamosa Community School lunch program will serve hot lunches in July, gathering and returning the children with school buses though out the community. The ALY Board supports this program, and will continue to use its time and resources to provide weekend backpacks of food during the 2020-2021 school year. ALY appreciates the work of its many volunteers as well as the support of the community as these decisions are being made.

**Jones County Food Bank:** To donate money, make checks payable to Jones County Community Food Bank (NOT HACAP) and mailed to 105 Broadway Place, Anamosa IA 52205. For appointment to drop off/pick up call 462-4343. **They need pancake mix to match the large donation of pancake syrup just received; also canned fruit, peas, green beans and corn.**

Wayne Zion web page has information about Jones County Food Banks. <https://waynezion.org/> in "Partner Links" tab.

**Apostolic Assembly Church,** food pickup times: Every 2nd and 4th Saturday 10AM-12PM Drive in, tell them number in your household, they will put a bag in your vehicle.

(more community events on page 4)

All are invited to join us for the Saint Paul



**Wapsi-Ana Park**

Immediately following 10:00 A.M. service.

(Rain date: Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup>)

**First Reading: The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 55:10-13**  
<sup>{NIV}</sup><sup>10</sup> *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup> so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. <sup>12</sup> You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. <sup>13</sup> Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."*

For years the Hebrew people had been exiled from their homeland. Because of their sins such as greed, lack of compassion for widows, orphans, the crippled and vulnerable, and laxity in worship, reverence and trust in God, the Israelites had succumbed to the conquest of the Babylonians. Many of the Jewish leaders had been killed or taken to Babylon to serve the king. Israel's wealth and religious artifacts from the Temple were plundered and despoiled. In the face of the people's discouragement, confusion, and loss, stood the mouthpiece of Yahweh, the

prophet Isaiah. Isaiah kept reminding the people of the words of the covenant of love: I will be your God and you will be my people. Isaiah had to point out that things will change, but it takes time. In this case, it took fifty years for the Israelites to be purged of their self-centeredness. Isaiah tried to make sense of their exile by comparing it to the growing season. When the Israelites first came into exile, they were like winter ground; the word of God (seed) was among them but untended. In the second generation of exile, they became like spring ground, rained upon, cleansed, and prepared for bringing life to the seed. In 539 BCE, when Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians and allowed the third generation of exiled Jews to return to rebuild Jerusalem, the Israelites realized the fruits of their penance. They had suffered, but now they were being given another chance to be the summer ground, warm and nourishing to the seed so that new life could be realized. That seed, God's word spoken among them, was being realized in the reestablishment of God's people.

The role of the prophet is a difficult one. It frequently means telling people things that are uncomfortable to hear. It is hard to point out people's sinfulness and not have some become defensive or even violent. This was the role Isaiah had played, and as the faithful remnant were streaming back into Jerusalem, Isaiah heard from the Lord God Yahweh words of affirmation. The fact that the Hebrew people had survived their exile and suffering while under his prophetic care showed the effectiveness of the "well trained" prophetic tongue. That is, when a prophet allows him or herself to be the word of God, that word becomes a tool for teaching and guidance; it nourishes the fertile mind and encourages growth in the heart. The new life being created in the Jewish people at the end of this exile was testimony to the fidelity of God, the integrity of the prophet, and the repentance of at least some of God's people.

#### **Psalm 65: 9-13 NIV**

<sup>9</sup>You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. <sup>10</sup>You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

<sup>11</sup>You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance. <sup>12</sup>The grasslands of the wilderness overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness.

<sup>13</sup>The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

#### **Second Reading: St. Paul's Letter to the Christians in Rome 8:1-11, 18-23**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>because through Christ Jesus the law

of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

<sup>5</sup>Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup>The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

The Christian community in Rome was suffering from internal division. In fact, just prior to this letter being written, the Jews, including those who followed the Christ, had been forced by the Emperor Claudius to leave home, family, and jobs because they were not welcome in Rome; they did not appropriately honor the Roman Emperor or gods. When they returned some five years later under permission from Caesar Nero, they found a thriving Gentile Christian community who regarded them with suspicion. Despite being Christian, the two groups did not easily mix because of generations of mistrust and negative judgments. In an effort to create unity within the Christian body, Paul points out what they have in common with each other and all of creation: suffering. What does the Christian message have to add to the discussion on human suffering?

Paul is trying to instill some dignity to the state of suffering all humans endure. First of all, he points out that we do not face this suffering alone because as believers baptized in Christ we have His Spirit within us. That "first fruit" of our belief gives our efforts, our suffering, our weaknesses the same nobility we see in the sufferings of Christ. We are not counseled to buck up

and accept our sufferings without complaint. Like Christ who bore his suffering by handing it over to his Father, *Abba*, we are invited to offer our suffering to our “Dad” for the sake of redemption. Redemption is freeing someone from slavery or the healing of separation that results from sinful behavior. Paul is offering a way to view humanity within creation by explaining the baptized community’s responsibility in Christ. We are told in Genesis that God created the universe, the earth, and all that inhabits it ‘good.’ It was humanity’s (Adam’s, earth creature’s) sin that disordered the relationship God intended for creation and brought chaos into the created order. God longs for this order and right relationship to return and has tried throughout history to nudge humankind back into it. Since humans brought about disorder, the reordering needed to come through a human as well. We know this human as Jesus. Jesus revealed the order God desired and called it the Kingdom of God. Jesus healed, raised up the poor and lowly, brought down the powerful and rich, instilled dignity, called people to clarity of action, inspired generosity and honesty, and gave his entire life for the glory of God so that those who chose to follow him could participate in the ongoing redemption of the world. Yes, as shocking as it is to the Greek philosophical sense, our fallible, created bodies will also be brought into unity with God.

The Christian does not regret the fact that we must live in hope for the time when all creation will be freed from disorder caused by sin. We live subject to all the miseries of the flesh. How can it be otherwise? But, we make decisions based on the hope for what we cannot yet see, and with patient endurance will one day realize the freedom promised all the children of God. The revelation the children of God offer to all of creation is that we already enjoy the influence of Holy Spirit and act in it with total confidence so that one day the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom will be realized.

As you listen to this reading from Paul, hear all the plurals (we, us, all creation). Paul wants us to know ourselves as a group of believers connected to all of creation, not as individual Christians struggling alone along a futile road. It is through the community known as the Mystical Body of Christ that redemption and salvation are most profoundly lived out. According to Paul, because of original sin, humans are born into the family of the devil, but through an adult profession of faith and baptism in Jesus, we are adopted by God as sons and daughters to tend God’s estate in Jesus’ place. This idea underlies the real reason for our Sunday Eucharist. Look around and ask, “Why should *we* endure the suffering of this present age?” Then say, “Because by doing so, *we* allow Christ to continue to redeem creation.”

### **Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NIV**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. <sup>2</sup>Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood

on the shore. <sup>3</sup>Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup>Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

<sup>18</sup>“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup>The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup>But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>22</sup>The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup>But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

A good parable is a story that speaks to hearers on different levels: the imagination, the intellect, the emotions, the will. Jesus does something very uncustomary when he pushes out from the seashore on a boat to teach, but it appears he is using the water and the shoreline to form a natural amphitheater, carrying his voice naturally to the throng gathered on the shore.

Jesus is speaking about what it means to be his disciple in the Kingdom of God. There had been many effective prophets before him, but the people listening to him were given a particular challenge: will you follow me as the Messiah, the one who is ushering in the Kingdom of God? To do so might mean giving up home, family, job, selfish behavior, security, etc. (The reaction to their decision would have been like a U.S. citizen supporting ideological Communism in the McCarthy era or filing as a conscientious objector in the face of a draft.) This parable, often referred to as the *Sower and Seed*, is meant to inspire the listeners to follow Jesus, not because of him but because of the word of God already spoken in their hearts.

Anyone who spent time around Jesus apparently had ample opportunity to experience him as the instrument of God’s power, but because of political and religious factions, it was difficult to accept the invitation to follow

Jesus. Many of the Jewish religious leaders had no desire to follow someone who upset the system that protected their status and wealth. They heard Jesus' proclaim, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" and saw the miracles that revealed it to be true, yet they did not let the truth sink into their hearts (the organ of understanding) or be reflected in their actions. This was the same observation Isaiah (chap. 6, quoted in today's gospel) made about the leaders in 725 BC that led to the destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians, and it is the description Matthew uses for the people who have "sluggish or gross" hearts in his community. All the evidence of God's Kingdom is before them, but they are unable, or unwilling, to let it affect their behavior and attitudes.

Jesus invited his listeners to see themselves initially as types of soil, receiving the word of God into themselves. Even though some of the soil appears to be "better" than the others, all of the soils are in the field being sown. This itself is worthy of reflection, but then the image changes by the end of this passage.

According to Jesus (or Matthew) in the explanation of the parable, the nation of Israel becomes the soil and the disciples become the planted seed. If the disciples truly receive the word of God and it takes root, they become the fruit, the seed (word of God), and because of their actions more fruit will be borne. In fact, if a believer lives by the Spirit of Christ with the word of God guiding her or his heart, they are destined to reap far more than the mind can imagine. {An expected return was four or five times what you sowed. Thirty-fold was ample; sixty was incredible, one-hundred fold was beyond imagination.... For the peasant tenant farmer, this implied that they could pay the landowner, pay the taxes, set seed aside for next year, and feed his family. However, Jesus was speaking of a spiritual harvest with a new order in the kingdom and not a magical grain harvest provided by a beneficent god.} Yet, like Jesus tells his disciples in another place, if you live in the Spirit, you will do things like me and even greater still (Jn 14:12). Who can imagine doing things greater than Jesus? Perhaps none of us individually can, but that is exactly what Jesus calls us collectively to do: to change the world through God's love in an even more profound way than he was able to do in his time and place.

If scholars are correct, Matthew wanted his community living in Antioch, Syria shortly after the fall of the City of Jerusalem {70 CE}, to do exactly what Jesus commissioned. The Christian community needed to stop grieving about the loss of the Temple, realize that they were called to be the living stones of God's new Temple, worship God in all places through the Spirit (John 4), and be God's word spoken as seed into the different soils of the world (Matthew 28).

### Taking it home:

- Think of one good act you did for another person in the past week. Now begin to imagine how like a spider web, or waves on a pond, that good act affected other people. How far did the influence go?
- YOUTH: go to a landscaping business, farm, or greenhouse this week. Ask the oldest person present to explain what elements go into "good soil." Find something to plant near a friend's house (you might want to get permission first....) Now parallel those elements to your own life. What makes you good soil?
- Manure is offensive to the senses but is really good for the earth, over time. What kinds of messages have been presented to you that seemed offensive at first but ended up being really helpful once applied? {Example: "Waste not, want not," Or "Don't put beans up your nose," Or "Honesty is the best policy," Or "Texting is not as effective as face to face communication," Or "Don't spend what you don't have."}
- Touch someone in the world. Go online and find Amnesty International's Website. Write a letter to a political prisoner being held in another country. Try to instill some hope amidst that person's suffering.
- When you listen today, what Word of God presents itself to you? Record the Words for a week. Do any patterns emerge?
- Put this thought into your own words: "offering my suffering to Abba God leads to healing." Share a story about how this has been true for you.
- When Jesus says, "*To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away,*" he is not necessarily speaking of material things, but of faith and understanding. Show how this is true in your own experience.

### Forks and Friends Community Meals:

Forks and Friends will return to its regular once-a-month schedule in July with a picnic in the park (Wapsiana, by the pool). Dinner will be served on Thursday, July 23, from 5-6:30.

### New Rules:

1. NO MASK, NO MEAL!!
2. Line will form at the east end of the pavilion.
3. 1 person will get meals for all members of your party.
4. Food will be served by volunteers. NO DINER will touch food until away from the serving line.
5. There is limited seating in the pavilion. Feel free to bring chairs or blankets to use in the park or take food home.
6. Hope to see you there

If this goes well in July we will repeat it in August on our usual 4th Thursday.

In case of inclement weather, there will be carry-out only at the Methodist Church.

### St. Paul Office Hours

Lois: M-Th 9-2; F 9-12  
 Nancy: M, W, Th 9-12  
 Kaileen M-F 6:00-9:30 pm (summer hours)

Hours Open

### St Paul Staff Emails and Phone Numbers

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Please call us if we can be of assistance. PLEASE leave a message if we cannot answer. We will return your call ASAP. We may be separated, BUT we are not alone!