



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

CREATIVELY CONNECT • INTENTIONALLY GROW • JOYFULLY SERVE

July 19, 2020  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after  
Pentecost

**Prayer Concerns:** For Lynn Rickels, Marty Rowland, 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:** It is an age-old question: Why is there evil in the world? In the parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus suggests that both grow together until the harvest. With Paul, we long for the day that all creation will be set free from bondage and suffering. Having both weeds and wheat within us, we humbly place our hope in the promises of God, and from the Lord's table we go forth to bear the fruit of justice and mercy.

**Congratulations to the newly elected.**

**Council:** Youth Specific Seat, Sean Hollett; General, Jamie Hamblin and Susan Koppenhaver.  
**Memorial Trust Committee:** Mary Achenbach  
**Audit Committee:** Stacie Sullivan

**Wedding Photos appreciated:** If you were married at St. Paul Lutheran Church from 2000–2020 we would like to have a copy of your wedding picture for the 2023 Anniversary Book (or before 2000 if you have not turned it in already). Please include your names (women's maiden name) and date you were married. Please send electronically if possible to stpaulanamosa@gmail.com or bring a photo to the office to be scanned. We appreciate your efforts.

**2020 Anniversary Book Photos Needed:** We are also looking for snap shots of special celebrations that happened at St. Paul. Please email or bring to the office your photos, include names and dates.

**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 canned tomatoes, green beans and pork & beans.**

(more community events on page 4)

**Service in the "Park"ing Lot:** Weather permitting, an outdoor worship experience will be offered at 10 A.M. each Sunday on the east side of the Education Building. **Bring your lawn chairs** for versatile social distancing in the parking lot. A few spaces within earshot will be made available for those who are unable to exit their vehicles. The service will be comprised of an opening song, a reading, a brief testimonial or reflection, prayers of intercession, the Our Father, and a closing song. This service is not intended to replace the recorded Sunday service but to accentuate it. An e-blast announcement will be sent by 9:00 a.m. if the service is cancelled.

**First Reading: The Book of Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19 {NRSV} [alternative]**

*There is no God besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned. For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all. For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved; and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity\*. But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency\*\*, and with much lenience you govern us; for power, whenever you will, attends you. And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins.*

**\*Temerity means "arrogant self-confidence." \*\*Clemency means "mercy or leniency."**

In 50 BCE, when this letter was composed, there was a large pocket of Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt. Some of the Jews had given up following the covenant of Yahweh and had adopted the Egyptian and/or Greek and/or Roman gods as their own. The dedicated Jews were concerned about this and wondered how it was they were to respond to their fallen away sisters and brothers. After all, their ancient covenant with God told them to avoid other religions, non-believers, and other schools of thought. It was difficult though, because Greek philosophy had infiltrated their community, and they were surrounded by a culture built on traditions and wealth that were not their own and populated by people who held different beliefs. Similar to today, many of the young people were being drawn away from the Tradition, and this caused the elders great angst. Perhaps you know parents who have lost scads of energy to worrying over their children's path as it differs from their own.

The author of Wisdom reminds them simply to look at God if they want to know how to respond to this situation. Though they are not God, their mission as the Chosen People is to imitate God, especially in the virtue of justice. Even though God is the “perfection of power,” God exercises it as a lenient, forgiving God. A primary example of this was the plagues of long ago. Ten times, God exercised power over the natural elements in a way that should have left the Pharaoh and his people quaking in their sandals, but they were mired in disbelief. Ten times, Yahweh God gave them a chance to turn from their gods and towards Him. Even despite their disbelief, He gave the Egyptians the chance to simply let His people go, but the hard-heartedness, greed and jealousy of the Egyptians led to their destruction in the Red Sea when the walls of water came crashing down. A secondary example of God’s merciful power was the way God traditionally dealt with Israel’s enemies. As Wisdom chapter 11 acknowledges: although Israel is God’s chosen, “You love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made. You spare all things, because they are yours, O Lord and lover of souls, for your imperishable spirit is in all things” (vs. 24, 26).

Over and over again, God invites repentance (turning away from sinful behavior and saying, “I’m sorry”) and leads all people in the hope that comes from salvation. The essence of God’s justice is mercy, not judgment. God’s anger, like that of a loving parent, is reserved for those who know God and God’s ways yet choose to act against God’s Word.

### **Psalm 86:11-17**

*<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. <sup>12</sup> I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. <sup>13</sup> For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.*

*<sup>14</sup> Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; ruthless people are trying to kill me — they have no regard for you. <sup>15</sup> But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. <sup>16</sup> Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength in behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did. <sup>17</sup> Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.*

### **Second Reading: St. Paul’s letter to the Christians living in Rome 8:12-25**

*<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—<sup>13</sup> for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we*

*are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*

*<sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup> for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup> and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God’s will.*

Recall the situation into which Paul was writing. The Christians in Rome around 55 CE, were divided and tearing each other down. They were not united, and it was because of different cultural values, not a disagreement over the basic tenets of Christian faith which included belief in Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit, a willingness to follow Jesus in suffering and new life, baptism, and the stories of the resurrection. There was real suffering in the community. The sad reality is that what suffering wasn’t due to natural human weakness was coming from the hands and mouths of other Christians.

In an effort to keep them from being totally fragmented or moving into despair, Paul reminds them that the presence of Holy Spirit is what unites, and that Holy Spirit will pray for them, with them, and through them even when they do not know how to pray. What is significant is the relationship they have with God as a community. The intention of Holy Spirit is that they be one in heart, mind, and spirit. That is why Paul uses all plural language: “our weakness,” “we do not know how to pray,” “the holy ones.” The holy ones are all the members of the Christian community. Like the other two readings today, Paul is encouraging this community to stop judging each other harshly and begin to give the issues that divide over to Holy Spirit. Anger happens but is not helpful in achieving the justice of God when it leads to violence.

The phrase “inexpressible groanings” as it refers to the intercession of Holy Spirit is most likely a reference to speaking in tongues. This trait was common in the early Christian communities; some Christians who experienced it thought they were superior to those who had not received *glossalalia*. Paul is reminding them not to act haughty when they receive the gift because it is

Holy Spirit praying through them. Spiritual gifts are not solely for the benefit of the individual but frequently are also for the benefit of the community.

### **Gospel: Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43 NIV**

<sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

<sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. <sup>27</sup> "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' <sup>28</sup> "'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' <sup>29</sup> "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

<sup>31</sup> He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches." <sup>33</sup> He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough." <sup>34</sup> Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. <sup>35</sup> So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." }

<sup>36</sup> Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." <sup>37</sup> He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. <sup>40</sup> "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

No matter how you shape the gospel parables for this weekend, they speak about the present reality of God's reign. In three distinct, yet related agricultural parables (the mustard seed and yeast are omitted for sake of focus), Jesus attempts to touch the hearts and minds of his disciples. He chose this method because a parable uses something common and familiar to teach people

about non-tangible realities; i.e. things that are of God's realm.

It is obvious right from the beginning of the parables that Jesus is talking about a reality that is here and now. Sowing the fields, planting weedy bushes, and baking bread are all activities that begin processes of growth over time. The "kingdom of heaven" has begun here and was initiated in Christ's birth. This is God's creation after all. Over time, God's presence had become more difficult for humans to recognize, so Jesus became human in order to redeem all creation by restoring right order and relationship and opening people's eyes to God's activity. The presence and power of God is able to be experienced here on earth. At the same time, there is a future reality in the kingdom of God. It is a time when all creation will be gathered once again into right relationship with their Creator. The birds will dwell in the branches of the kingdom; all will be fed by the leavened bread, fruit will be borne out of human labor and the seed. Even greater still, the Kingdom of God, like a weed, sometimes grows where we least expect it. We should not be quick to judge what is good and bad, nor what is of God's Kingdom and what is not. A weed is a plant that is in an undesirable place. Humans love to judge what plants are worthy, beautiful, useful, etc., and moving to eradicate those we perceive as weeds. Everything has dignity as a creation of God but sometimes it is experienced as being out of place. How do we recognize the worth of a plant that is out of place? How do we accept God's kingdom when it emerges in our life in an undesired time or in an uncomfortable way?

Biblical scholars invite us to be a bit skeptical when reading the "explanation" of the parable of the weeds in the field. While it is helpful to realize that we must be patient with those who have not yet grasped the meaning of living as Jesus' disciples, the explanation itself probably did not come from the lips of Jesus. It doesn't make sense for him to tell a parable which carries with it multiple layers of meaning and then have him turn around and explain it as an allegory (i.e. this means that). This technique of explaining what each element in a parable means was common in the second and third century Church. Preachers and teachers alike would do this to make the parables understandable for their congregations. But this violates the very purpose of using a parable. Parables can speak to us in different ways at different times in our lives.

The first time I hear a parable, I might be very aware of all the weeds (undesirable people) around me and justify my wheaty treatment of them as 'children of the evil one.' Then, the next time I might see how I am or have been a weed for others. This realization could lead me to a new-found gratitude for the fact that I was not plucked out of the ground at an earlier age. Over time, I could see in the parable of the mustard seed, what I thought was the action of a fool planting a weed in his field actually was part of a bigger reality I could not grasp in my quick judgment: that the grown bush would provide safe haven for other life. So it is in God's Kingdom.

Keeping in mind Matthew's intention in writing his gospel, the fact that he has Jesus sharing the meaning of

the parable in private very likely emphasizes how important it was to be part of Jesus' in-group because that is where the truths were revealed and understanding was found. Some on the outside would certainly want to be on the inside. This additional insight was offered to a community of Jewish Christians struggling to understand how God's Kingdom and the messianic reign begun in Jesus could continue following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Again, the implicit message Jesus offers is that mercy and patience must endure over judgment, ridicule, and anger in the kingdom of heaven. We are all in the field now, as weeds or wheat, and we are called to live with each other in patient endurance as the reaper gathers us to Himself Sunday after Sunday until we are gathered together one final time.

### **Taking it to heart.**

Is there another Christian in the community whom you have judged harshly and might need an apology from you? If that person is unaware of your judgment, perhaps you could intentionally find something positive about that person to share with family/community/co-workers instead.

Is there a weed in your life who needs patience from you? Look to God for support in being patient. Make this your prayer each day this week/month/year.

For whom are you a weed? Ask God to change your heart so you can avoid the sin that makes you a weed.

What might these parables offer to the conversation on the moral correctness of capital punishment?

Drop a note to someone in the parish or community thanking her or him for the ways s/he served the kingdom or revealed the presence of God to you.

**Mindfulness** (set aside five minutes. breathe and read through three times. Which words or ideas hold energy for you? What images and feelings emerge in your imagination?)

“True baptism allows us to reframe, and contain, the reality of evil, without needing to blame anyone else, without any need for shame or vengeance. We are all in this together, and our common wound shows itself in different ways.” — [Richard Rohr, Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation](#)

“Bonaventure's theology is never about trying to placate a distant or angry God, earn forgiveness, or find some abstract theory of justification. He is all cosmic optimism and hope! Once it lost this kind of mysticism, Christianity became preoccupied with fear, unworthiness, and guilt much more than being included in—and delighting in—an all-pervasive plan that is already in place.” — [Richard Rohr, Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi](#)

### **Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and**

**Eucharist**, is a declaration of the consensus achieved by Lutherans and Catholics on the topics of church, ministry and Eucharist as the result of ecumenical dialogue between the two communions between 1965 and 2015.

II. STATEMENT OF AGREEMENTS: B. Agreements on Ordained Ministry.

**Authority of Ministry** (19) The authority of the ministry is not to be understood as an individual possession of the minister, but it is rather an authority with the commission to serve in the community and for the community. (20) Catholics and Lutherans also agree that the office of ministry stands over against (gegenüber) the community as well as within it and thus is called to exercise authority over the community. **Ordination** (21) Catholics and Lutherans agree that entry into this apostolic and God-given ministry is not by baptism but by ordination. They agree that ministers cannot ordain themselves or claim this office as a matter of right but are called by God and designated in and through the church. (22) Catholics and Lutherans both ordain through prayer invoking the Holy Spirit and with the laying on of hands by another ordained person. Both affirm that the ordinand receives an anointing of the Holy Spirit, who equips that person for ordained ministry. (23) Both Lutherans and Catholics regard ordination as unrepeatable.

#### **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.

#### **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!