

# Morning Prayer

## Proper 10, Pentecost 6

July 12, 2020



### Prelude

### Announcements

### Opening Hymn

Hymnal 632

*O Christ, the Word Incarnate*

1 O Christ, the Word In - car - nate, O Wis - dom from on high,  
2 The Church from our dear Mas - ter re - ceived the word di - vine,  
3 O make thy Church, dear Sa - vior, a lamp of pur - est gold,

O Truth, un - changed, un - chang - ing, O Light of our dark sky;  
and still that light is lift - ed o'er all the earth to shine.  
to bear be - fore the na - tions thy true light as of old;

we praise thee for the ra - diance that from the scrip - ture's page,  
 It is the chart and com - pass that o'er life's surg - ing sea,  
 O teach thy wan - dering pil - grims by this their path to trace,

a lan - tern to our foot - steps, shines on from age to age.  
 mid mists and rocks and quick - sands, still guides, O Christ, to thee.  
 till, clouds and dark - ness end - ed, they see thee face to face.

## Confession of Sin

*The Presider says*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. *Philippians 1:2*

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to set forth our praise, to hear God's holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us keep silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by God's infinite goodness and mercy.

*Silence is kept.*

*The People's Respondent, the Presider, and the People*

**God of all mercy,  
 we confess that we have sinned against you,  
 opposing your will in our lives.  
 We have denied your goodness in each other,  
 in ourselves, and in the world you have created.  
 We repent of the evil that enslaves us,  
 the evil we have done,  
 and the evil done on our behalf.**

**Forgive, restore, and strengthen us  
through our Savior Jesus Christ,  
that we may abide in your love  
and serve only your will. Amen.**

*The Priest then says*

Almighty God have mercy on you, + forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

## **The Invitatory and Psalter**

*Presider* Lord, open our lips.

*People* **And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen. Alleluia.**

God is the Rock of our salvation:  
**O come let us worship.**

### **Jubilate: Psalm 100**

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; \*  
serve the Lord with gladness  
and come before his presence with a song.

**Know this: The Lord himself is God; \*  
he himself has made us, and we are his;  
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.**

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;  
go into his courts with praise; \*  
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.

**For the Lord is good;  
his mercy is everlasting; \*  
and his faithfulness endures from age to age.**

### **Psalm 65:1-14**

<sup>1</sup>You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; \*  
to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>**To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come, \*  
because of their transgressions.**

<sup>3</sup>Our sins are stronger than we are, \*  
but you will blot them out.

**<sup>4</sup>Happy are they whom you choose  
and draw to your courts to dwell there! \*  
they will be satisfied by the beauty of your house,  
by the holiness of your temple.**

<sup>5</sup>Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness,  
O God of our salvation, \*  
O Hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the seas that are far away.

**<sup>6</sup>You make fast the mountains by your power; \*  
they are girded about with might.**

<sup>7</sup>You still the roaring of the seas, \*  
the roaring of their waves,  
and the clamor of the peoples.

**<sup>8</sup>Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous  
signs; \***

**you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.**

<sup>9</sup>You visit the earth and water it abundantly;  
you make it very plenteous; \*  
the river of God is full of water.

**<sup>10</sup>You prepare the grain, \*  
for so you provide for the earth.**

<sup>11</sup>You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; \*  
with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.

**<sup>12</sup>You crown the year with your goodness, \*  
and your paths overflow with plenty.**

<sup>13</sup>May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, \*  
and the hills be clothed with joy.

**<sup>14</sup>May the meadows cover themselves with flocks,  
and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; \*  
let them shout for joy and sing.**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the  
beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

## **The Lessons**

### **First Reading**

Genesis 25:19-34

A Reading from the book of Genesis.

<sup>19</sup>These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, <sup>20</sup>and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. <sup>21</sup>Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>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."

<sup>24</sup>When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup>The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. <sup>26</sup>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.

<sup>27</sup>When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. <sup>28</sup>Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

<sup>29</sup>Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. <sup>30</sup>Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) <sup>31</sup>Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." <sup>32</sup>Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" <sup>33</sup>Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

*Reader*            The Word of the Lord.  
*People*            **Thanks be to God.**

## **Canticle 18: A Song to the Lamb**

*The Reader, the People's Respondent, and the People*

Splendor and honor and royal power \*  
are yours by right, O God Most High,  
**For you created everything that is, \***  
**and by your will they were created and have their being;**  
And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain, \*  
for with your blood you have redeemed for God,  
**From every family, language, people, and nation, \***  
**a royal priesthood to serve our God.**  
And so, to the One who sits upon the throne, \*  
and to Christ the Lamb,  
**Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor, \***  
**for ever and for evermore.**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

## Second Reading

Romans 8:1-11

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Romans.

<sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup>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, <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>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, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If 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.

*Reader*            The Word of the Lord.  
*People*             **Thanks be to God.**

## Hymn

Tune: *Land of Rest*

*Almighty God, your word is cast*

*Unison or harmony*

1 Al- -might- -y God, your word is cast like  
2 Let not our self- -ish- -ness and hate this  
3 Let not the world's de- -ceit- -ful cares the

The musical notation consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains a melody line with various note values and rests. The bass staff contains a harmonic accompaniment consisting of chords and single notes. The lyrics are written below the treble staff, with three different versions of the text provided for different parts of the hymn.

seed in- -to the ground; now let the dew of  
 ho- -ly seed re- -move, but give it root in  
 ri- -sing plant de- -stroy, but let it yield a

heaven de- -scend, and right- -eous fruits a- -bound.  
 ev- -ery heart to bring forth fruits of love.  
 hun- -dred- -fold the fruits of peace and joy.

**Third Reading**

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

A Reading from Matthew.

At about that same time Jesus left the house and sat on the beach. In no time at all, a crowd gathered along the shoreline, forcing him to get into a boat. Using the boat as a pulpit, he addressed his congregation, telling stories.

“What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As she scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn’t put down roots, so when the sun came up, it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond her wildest dreams. Are you listening to this? Really listening?”

“Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn’t take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person’s heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road. “The seed cast in the gravel—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off,



and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it. “The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the good News, but weeds of worry, and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun, strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it. “The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.”

*Reader* The Word of the Lord.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

## **Sermon**

### **The Apostles' Creed**

*The People's Respondent, the Presider, and the People*

**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.**

## **The Prayers**

*Presider* The Lord be with you.

*People* **And also with you.**

*Presider* Let us pray.

*The People's Respondent, the Presider, and the People*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**



**Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

V. Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance;

**R. Govern and uphold them, now and always.**

V. Day by day we bless you;

**R. We praise your Name for ever.**

V. Lord, keep us from all sin today;

**R. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.**

V. Lord, show us your love and mercy;

**R. For we put our trust in you.**

V. In you, Lord, is our hope;

**R. And we shall never hope in vain.**

### *The Collect of the Day*

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### *A Collect for Guidance*

Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### *A Collect for the Renewal of Life*

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### *A Prayer for Mission*

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Intercessions and thanksgivings**

*Presider* Mercifully receive our prayers, O God, that we may know your ways and follow where you lead, responding, “Hear us, good Lord.”

*Intercessor* For those who are seeking a spiritual home, that they may be inspired to visit our churches and to receive a deep sense of God’s presence through our worship together and the hospitality we share; let us pray. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Silence is kept.*

That we may be set free from the need to claim our worthiness through possessions and position, so that we may discover our true identity in the life and hope of the Holy Spirit; let us pray. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Silence is kept.*

That the light of Christ will reveal the path to those for whom the shadows are long, the poor and desperate, the lonely and unemployed, the hungry and fearful, the refugee and homeless, the prisoner and those who live as if in prison, that we may not forget them; let us pray. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Silence is kept.*

For our Commander-in-Chief and all who serve in the armed forces, that we may be thankful for their many sacrifices, and honor the service they render to our country and to the security of the world; let us pray. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Silence is kept.*

For those who have died, [especially \_\_\_\_\_], that they may reside in that place where there is no sorrow or pain, but life everlasting; let us pray. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Silence is kept.*

For safety for children who are on vacation, that they may have the chance to learn new skills, build healthy bodies, and develop new and lasting friendships; let us pray. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Silence is kept.*

With heart and mind turned toward God, we continue our prayers, remembering before you our Bishops Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Julio, Moises, Elizabeth, Donald and Craig. We pray for all ministers, priests, deacons, ministry teams and those in formation; and our brothers and sisters worshipping at Holy Faith, Saline, Trinity/Spirit of Hope, Detroit; and St Simon’s, San Marcos, and St Titus’, Jimani, in the Dominican Republic. We give you thanks for all the blessings and mercies we have received [especially \_\_\_\_\_]. We pray for those who are sick, or in any distress or trouble [especially \_\_\_\_\_].

*Silence is kept.*

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; for this we pray. **Hear us, good Lord.**

*Priest* In union, O Lord with the faithful at every altar of your Church, where the Holy Eucharist is now being celebrated, we desire to offer our praise and thanksgiving. We present to you our souls and bodies with the earnest wish that we may always be united to you. And since we cannot now receive you sacramentally, we beseech you to come spiritually into our hearts. We unite ourselves to you, and embrace you with all the affections of our souls. Let nothing ever separate us from you. **Amen.**

*The Presider then says*

My sisters and brothers, I invite you- wherever you are- to take into your hands the gifts you offer today. Gifts of food, gifts of money, gifts of whatever form, and join me as we offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good our vows to the Most High.

Let us pray.

Loving God and merciful Creator, whose hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: we come to you with thanksgiving and praise. We offer to you this day our gifts of time, talent, and possessions, knowing that all we are, and all we have, is a gift from you. Please accept these gifts, and help us to reach out to others as you, our God, have reached out to us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### ***A Prayer of St. Chrysostom***

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: **Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn**

*Go light your world*

Chorus Book 68

G  $\frac{E_m}{G}$  G7 C G

1. There is a can - dle in ev - 'ry soul, Some burn - ing  
 2. Frus - trat - ed broth - er, see how he's tried to Light his own  
 3. We are a fam - 'ly whose hearts are blaz - ing. Let's raise our

F2 F  $\frac{C}{G}$  G C

bright - ly, some dark and cold. There is a Spir - it who brings a  
 can - dle some oth - er way. See now your sis - ter, she's been robbed and  
 can - dles - light up the sky! Pray to our Fath - er in the name of

G  $\frac{C}{E}$  F  $\frac{E}{G}$  G  $\frac{E_m}{G}$  G7 C  $\frac{C}{G}$   $\frac{E_m}{G}$   $\frac{D_m}{G}$

fire, Ig - nites a can - dle and makes His home.  
 lied to, Still holds a can - dle with - out a flame. Car - ry your  
 Je - sus; Make us a bea - con in dark - est times.

C  $\frac{C}{E}$  F2 F  $\frac{C}{G}$

can - dle, run to the dark - ness, Seek out the hope - less, con - fused and

F<sup>2</sup>/<sub>G</sub> G E<sub>m</sub>/<sub>G</sub> D<sub>m</sub>/<sub>G</sub> C C/<sub>E</sub> F<sup>2</sup> F  
 torn. Hold out your can - dle for all to see it, Take your  
 can - dle, and go light your world. Take your can - dle, and go light your world.

**Dismissal and Blessing**

*Priest* Go into the world, and know how much a tired and hurting world needs your strength and gladness. For there are deeds of compassion and courage that will never be done, unless you do them; and words of hope and healing that will never be spoken, unless you speak them.

And the blessing of God, † Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, be with you, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Presider* Let us bless the Lord.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

*Presider* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

**Postlude**

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**REGARDING OFFERINGS TO ST. BARNABAS CHURCH**

**To make your regular offering to St Barnabas**, please mail your check to the church: 20500 W Old US-12, Chelsea MI 48118-1309. Mail is being collected daily.

**If you wish to make an offering online**, you can use this link provided by the Diocese to do so securely: <https://www.edomi.org/give/> Contributions given here will be transferred by the diocesan Treasurer to St Barnabas.

**CONTINUING OUR DONATIONS OF FOOD AND FUNDS TO FAITH IN ACTION**

Faith in Action is providing leadership in collecting donations to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas.

**Needed right now:** 64-oz. juices, cereal (no Cheerios, please), baking mix, chips, shampoo, conditioner; cleaning products, and personal products are always needed, as these items cannot be purchased with food stamps. **You may bring your donations to FIA**, or to Nancy who will see that they get there.

Donations to help us combat the continuing effects of the pandemic can be made by PayPal at [www.faithinaction1.org](http://www.faithinaction1.org), by [Facebook](#), or by mailing a check to *Faith in Action, 603 S. Main Street, Chelsea MI 48118*.

**If you need help, please call FIA at (734) 475-3305**

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**Enrichment for Our Spiritual Journey**

**Join St Barnabas'** twice-weekly Zoom check-in! Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. Contact Bill or Marion if you need the link.

**Watch** Bishop Bonnie Perry's sermons, <https://www.edomi.org/whatsheaid/sermons/>

**Watch** Washington National Cathedral's live-streamed Eucharist and Daily Office services, <https://cathedral.org/calendar/>

**Join in** a short, weekly, meditation with Presiding Bishop Curry here: <https://episcopalchurch.org/habits-of-grace>

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**Upcoming Commemorations**

- July 12 Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala and Ecumenist, 1931
- 13 Conrad Weiser, Witness to Peace and Reconciliation, 1760
- 14 Samson Occom, Witness to the Faith in New England, 1792
- 16 "The Righteous Gentiles"
- 17 William White, Bishop of Pennsylvania, 1836

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**Gospel reading** from Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message Remix 2.0: The Bible In contemporary Language*. NAVPress - A. Kindle Edition. pp.1754-1755.  
**Concluding prayer** at the Intercessions adapted from *The Armed Forces Prayer Book*, 1951.

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## Scripture preparation for July 19, 2020: Pentecost 7, Proper 11A

### Genesis 28:10-19a

In this passage from Genesis, Jacob has left the home of his parents, Isaac and Rebecca, in search of a wife. The circumstances of his leaving weren't ideal; having tricked been tricked out of his father's blessing, Esau is plotting to kill Jacob. Jacob leaves his home to avoid Esau's wrath and to start a new life in Haran, and on the way, he has an encounter with God. He dreams of a ladder that reaches from the earth all the way to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. God appears to Jacob and promises him the land on which he is lying and offspring as numerous as "the dust of the earth." God blesses Jacob and his offspring and promises to be with him wherever he goes. Waking from the dream, Jacob realizes that this is holy ground and he sets a pillar there to mark it. He recognizes this as a place where God's messengers move between heaven and earth, where God comes close. This holy encounter doesn't happen in Jacob's hometown or at his ultimate destination; it happens when he has just begun his journey, at an in-between place. God appears to Jacob at the portal between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the known and the unknown, and there, he finds a new place to worship God.

Many of us have been living in an in-between place these past months, with much of our lives turned upside down by the pandemic. We've been staying in our homes, displaced from our church buildings, and like Jacob, the circumstances of leaving our normal lives behind are not ideal. Yet, even as we move into this strange territory, we may find unexpected encounters with God. We are learning to worship God in new ways and in different places, and through it all, we are assured that God is with us.

- When have you found God in the "in-between" places?

### Psalm 139: 1-11, 22-23

The psalmist prays to God in a most familiar and intimate way. He is confident that God not only knows him but has searched him out. God sees even his most mundane actions of "sitting down" and "rising up," knows all his inner thoughts, and knows every word he speaks. Anywhere he might go, to the "uttermost parts of the sea," even in death, God is with him. His relationship with God is secure,

constant, and very, very close. Yet, even so, the psalmist recognizes that God is beyond his knowing, that God sees things that he cannot see. What appears to be darkness to him is not dark for God. “Darkness and light to you are both alike,” he says, recognizing that God sees all, even in the dark of night. And still, the psalmist asks God to search his heart, to try him, and to “know [his] restless thoughts” to see if “there be any wickedness in [him].”

It takes courage to invite God to search our hearts to see if there is any wickedness in us. We might be afraid of what God might find there. Yet, just as the psalmist does, we can trust that by inviting God in, we are entering into deeper relationship with a loving God who knows us already, because God created us. God knows us and wants to be in relationship with us, wants to be close to us, just as we are, with God’s right hand holding us fast.

- How might you invite God into deeper relationship in your life?

### **Romans 8:12-25**

In his letter to the Romans, Paul is writing to a community he had not founded and never visited. Yet, somehow, he seems to recognize their struggles, offer them wisdom, and proclaim to them a message of salvation for all. Paul’s letter was prompted by tensions that had arisen between Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus in Rome. The issues they disagree over, Paul says, are things of the flesh, while the values they share in common are of the Spirit. In his letter, Paul urges them to put aside their differences and to come together as one in Christ. He does this by recognizing all of them as children of God, all crying out to their Father - Abba. Paul extends his imagery of parenthood to all of God’s creation, which has “been groaning in labor pains until now” and is giving birth in them to the “first fruits” of this new creation in Jesus Christ. This new multi-ethnic community, this new kind of family of Jews and Gentiles together, confounds and upends the social status quo that maintains division between competing factions. Paul tells them that their community is, instead, the seed of reconciliation and hope for the liberation and salvation of all God’s children.

Tension and divisiveness are rampant in our world today. Sometimes, it seems impossible that people with different opinions or beliefs could ever come together. As Christians, we are called to something greater, beyond politics, beyond race, and beyond cultural identity, to work for reconciliation and love for all God’s children.

- Where do you find hope for reconciliation and love today?

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

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus teaches his disciples with the parable of the weeds among the wheat and then, very clearly, explains exactly what he means by it. There is no need for us to guess what Jesus is talking about here, nor is there any way to soften his message or avoid the harsh judgment it contains. At the end of days, those who find themselves numbered among the weeds will be thrown into “the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Jesus is speaking in cosmic terms about God’s purposes and the very real presence of evil in the world. It is the “enemy” who plants the weeds among the wheat. For a time, the good wheat and the evil weeds will live and thrive together in this world, until the coming of God’s reign.

We may not be comfortable with judgmental parables like this one, but Jesus has an important lesson for us here about how to make choices in our lives. The seeds are sown either by Jesus or by the devil. The difference between them is their point of origin, out of whose hand they are planted. We may want to check our motivations to be certain about who plants us in the world and exactly what we



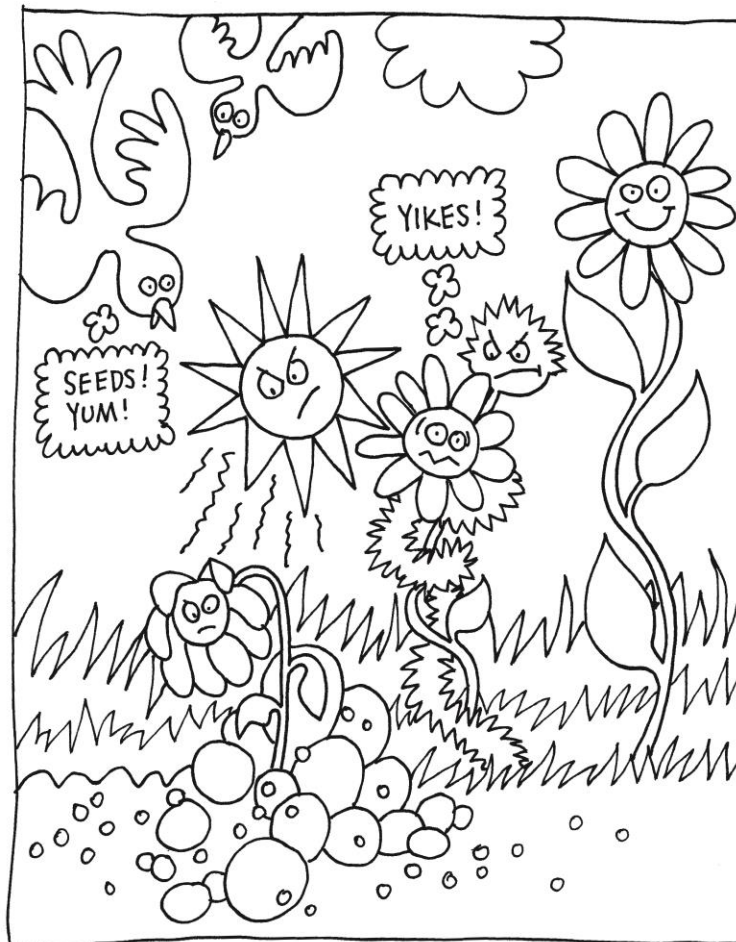
are growing into. Jesus is urging us to join the company of “good seeds,” the children of the kingdom, to help to build God’s kingdom and make it fruitful.

- In our work to build the kingdom of God, how might some of the seeds we sow become wheat and others weeds?

*This Bible study was written by Meredith Ward.* Published by the Office of Communication of The Episcopal Church, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017 © 2020 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

### **Our Mission:**

We seek to grow as diverse disciples of Jesus Christ, and to serve Jesus by serving others in the world, guided by the values of Ancient Rites, Open Minds, and Affirming Hearts.



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