

JULY 16, 2023  
SEVENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST



*God's word makes a difference for our lives.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23	Parable of the sower
Monday	Isaiah 55:10-13	God's word is powerful
Tuesday	Romans 8:1-11	Life in the Spirit
Wednesday	2 Timothy 3:10-17	Paul's charge to Timothy
Thursday	Joshua 1:1-9	God's commission to Joshua
Friday	Hebrews 4:8-13	The rest that God has promised
Saturday	Psalms 65	Thanksgiving for earth's bounty
Sunday	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43	Parable of the weeds

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*"Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"*  
**Matthew 13:8-9 (NRSV)**

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### **A Prayer for the Week:**

Creative God, your word accomplishes all that you desire; we thank you for your work of love that brings hope and healing through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### **Mealtime Prayer:**

Almighty God, by your strength you bring forth food from the earth. Thank you for the abundant harvest that we enjoy today. Amen.

#### **A Blessing to Give:**

May God's creative word bear fruit in your life through Christ.



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### HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Lord, Let My Heart  
Be Good Soil*



### WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

### CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What do you think it takes to be a good gardener and have a successful harvest?
- We can receive God's word in worship, by reading the Bible, and through prayer and conversations. What is a favorite way for you to receive God's word?

### DEVOTIONS

*Read:* Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.

Jesus compares the sower's seed to God's word that bears much fruit. The seed needs to be planted in good soil to grow. Jesus compares the soil to our lives and our ability to hear and receive God's word. We can wonder if we are the good soil that receives God's word, but it may be that at different times we exhibit all four soils. There are times God's word doesn't stick (the path); sometimes it takes root but quickly dries up (rocky ground); sometimes the word gets smothered by competing concerns (thorns); sometimes the word takes root and produces much fruit (good soil). Our lives can experience all of these moments. This parable can be a humble reminder for us to be open to God's word so that our lives bear the fruit of love and peace. No matter how God's word bears fruit in our lives, it grows into a surprising harvest.

*Discuss:* How and when are you most attentive to God's word in your life?

*Pray:* **Dear God, you who are the source of all living things, bless us with faith in your word and your work in our lives to bless the world through Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

### SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings for this week, how might you serve others with the power of God's healing and forgiveness?

### RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Gather four small pots. Fill the first with gravel to represent a path, the second with rocks, the third with thorns or thistles, and the fourth with good soil. Tell the parable of the sower in your own words. As you hold each pot, pray: **Lord God, keep us from having hearts that are hard, like a path. Keep us from having hearts that are shallow, like soil on rocky ground. Keep us from having hearts that are easily choked, like seeds among thorns. Instead, make our hearts like good soil, so that we gladly receive your word and accept it. Amen.**



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