

Ninth Sunday After Pentecost



Secret of the Seed

Jan Richardson © janrichardsonimages.com

July 26th 2026
Portage Lake United Church

Welcome and Announcements

*We gather in the name of the Holy Trinity, one God, source of all goodness and mercy.
No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.*

- The August sign-up for Sunday morning volunteers in the lounge.
Please add your name and help us worship!
- The Angel Mission needs: Low-sodium canned meats (Sloppy-joe, chili, etc.)
- ***Are there any other announcements?***



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all

*Liturgical Color Green – Ordinary Time
Lectionary Year A*

Presider: Rev. Peter Norland
Musicians: Susie Byykkonen
Greeters: Lois Jambekar
Reader: Lois Jambekar
Prayer Writer: Greg Campbell
Coffee: Sangja Lee and Biruta Lowther

MEDITATION

The Christian Gospels do not encourage
anyone to believe that he or she can
choose both the palace and the lotus:
both mammon and God.

from: Dimensions of Prayer, by Douglas V. Steere

PRELUDE

Romance, Op. 118, No. 5, Brahms

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

✦ CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive)

The earth is the Lord's, for he made it;
come, let us adore him.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness:
come, let us adore him.

The mercy of the Lord is everlasting:
come, let us adore him.

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouths shall proclaim your praise!



Photo by Sherry Middlemis-Brown

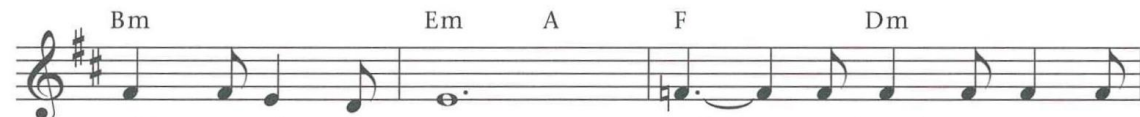
✚ HYMN "God, the Sculptor of the Mountains" #78 Green

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78 God the Sculptor of the Mountains



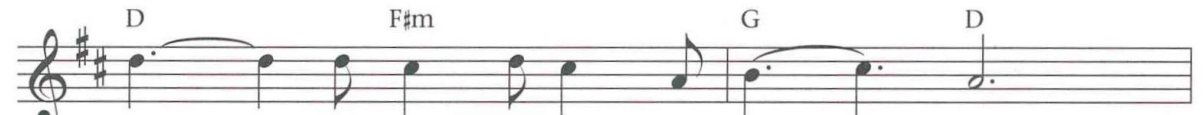
1 God the sculp - tor of the moun - tains, God the
2 God the nui - sance to the Pha - raoh, God the
3 God the dress - er of the vine - yard, God the
4 God the un - ex - pect - ed in - fant, God the



mill - er of the sand, God the jewel - er of the
cleav - er of the sea, God the pil - lar in the
plant - er of the wheat, God the reap - er of the
calm, de - ter - mined youth, God the ta - ble - turn - ing



heav - ens, God the pot - ter of the land:
dark - ness, God the bea - con of the free:
har - vest, God the source of all we eat:
proph - et, God the re - sur - rect - ed truth:



You are spark of all cre - a - tion.
You are fount of all de - liv - 'rance.
You are host at ev - 'ry ta - ble.
You are pres - ent ev - 'ry mo - ment.



We are form - less; shape us now.
We are sight - less; lead us now.
We are hun - gry; feed us now.
We are search - ing; meet us now.

✚ PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, your loving-kindness is better than life.
There is nothing that can separate us from your enduring love.
Move us out, draw us close, and keep us steady,
that we might serve you all the days of our lives.
All glory, power, dominion, and majesty are yours
from eternity to eternity.
Amen.

✚ PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

Spirit, intercede . . .

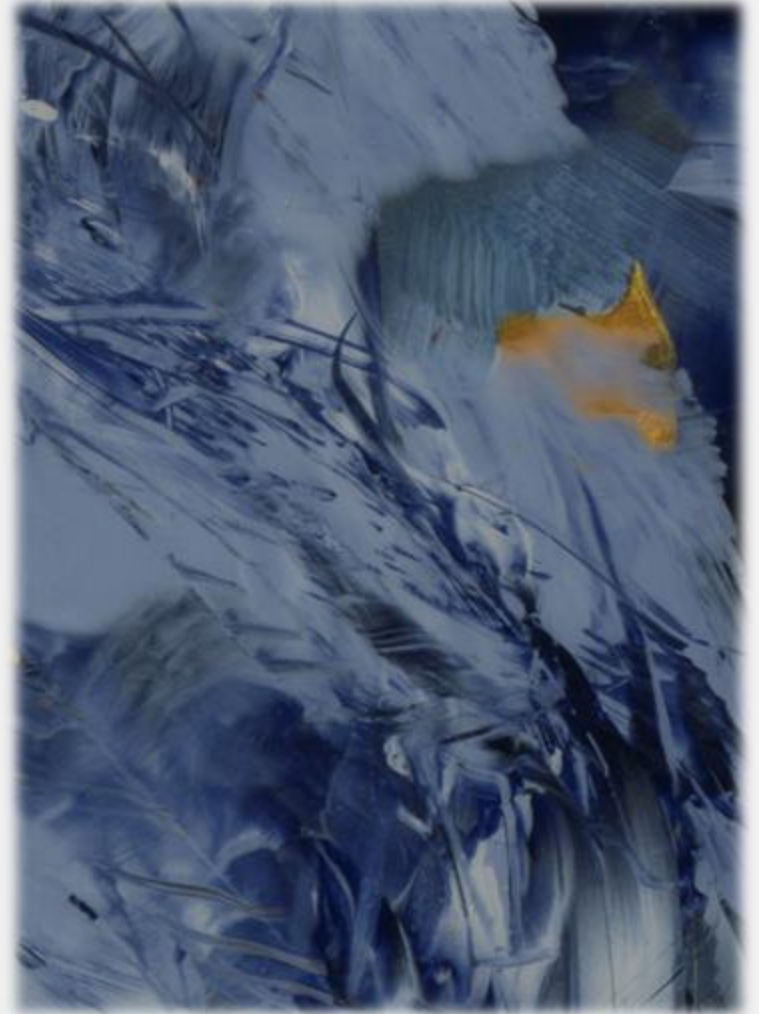
**when we fall short of your glory,
when we do not deserve your promises,
when we do not act like those
who have been called your family.**

Spirit, intercede . . .

**when our words wound,
when our silence speaks volumes,
when our actions are a far cry
from what you would have us do.**

Spirit, intercede . . .

**break forth into our lives,
forming us into the image of your Son,
that we might never feel separate from you again.**



*Only Speak the Word © Jan Richardson
<https://www.janrichardsonimages.com>*

✚ DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

Beloved, hear this good news:
God is for us.
Not even our sins can separate us
from the love of God.
We are forgiven.

**Glory be to God
for this grace and mercy!**



And Cleanse Me © Jan Richardson
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✦ PASSING THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Greet each other with a sign of God's peace.

Children of God, we are the body of Christ.

**By one spirit
we were baptized into one body.**

Keep the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.

Amen! We are bound by the love of Christ.

Imagine all the people
living life in peace...

John Lennon

© 2014

FIRST READING Genesis 29:15-28

Leah and Rachel, Jacob's wives

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" 16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was graceful and beautiful. 18 Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." 19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. 21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." 22 So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. 23 But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. 24 (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) 25 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?" 26 Laban said, "This is not done in our country--giving the younger before the firstborn. 27 Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." 28 Jacob did so and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

Word of God. Word of Life. Thanks be to God

Second Reading Romans Romans 8:26-39

²⁶ 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 groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

God's Love in Christ Jesus

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ 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.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God**

1 In deepest night, in darkest days,
when harps are hung, no songs we raise,
when silence must suffice as praise,
yet sounding in us quietly
there is the song of God.

2 When friend was lost, when love deceived,
dear Jesus wept, God was bereaved;
so with us in our grief God grieves,
and round about us mournfully
there are the tears of God.

3 When through the waters winds our path,
around us pain, around us death:
deep calls to deep, a saving breath,
and found beside us faithfully
there is the love of God.

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In Deepest Night

Capo 1: (D) Eb (Em7) Fm7 (D) Eb

1 In deep - est night, in dark - est days, when harps are hung,
2 When friend was lost, when love de - ceived, dear Je - sus wept,
3 When through the wa - ters winds our path, a - round us pain,

(Em7) Fm7 (Bm) Cm (D) Eb (G) Ab

no songs we raise, when si - lence must suf - fice as praise,
God was be - reaved; so with us in our grief God grieves,
a - round us death, deep calls to deep, a sav - ing breath,

(D) Eb (Dmaj7) Ebmaj7 (E) F (Em7) Fm7 (G) Ab (A7) Bb7 (Dsus) Eb

yet sound - ing in us qui - et - ly there is the song of God.
and round a - bout us mourn - ful - ly there are the tears of God.
and found be - side us faith - ful - ly there is the love of God.

If we are honest about the range of human experience, not everything we sing in church can be loud or joyful. The author describes this hymn as "a song of quiet hope in the middle of intense sorrow." It speaks eloquently of God's presence with us through our most difficult times.

+ GOSPEL READING Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³¹ He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² 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.”

The Parable of the Yeast

³³ 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.”

Three Parables

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

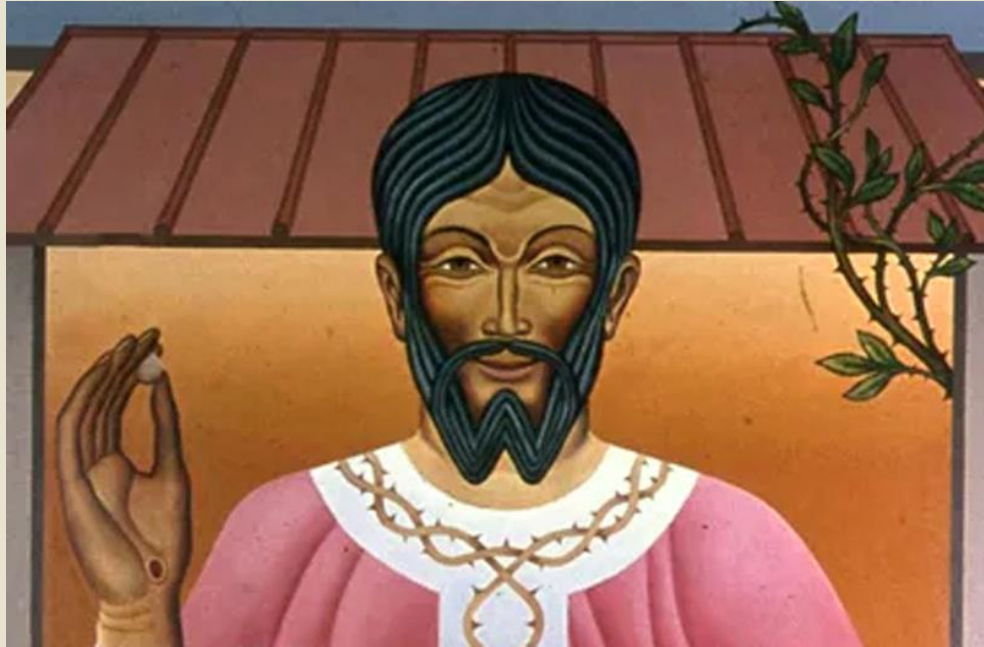
⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Treasures New and Old

⁵¹ “Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” ⁵² And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

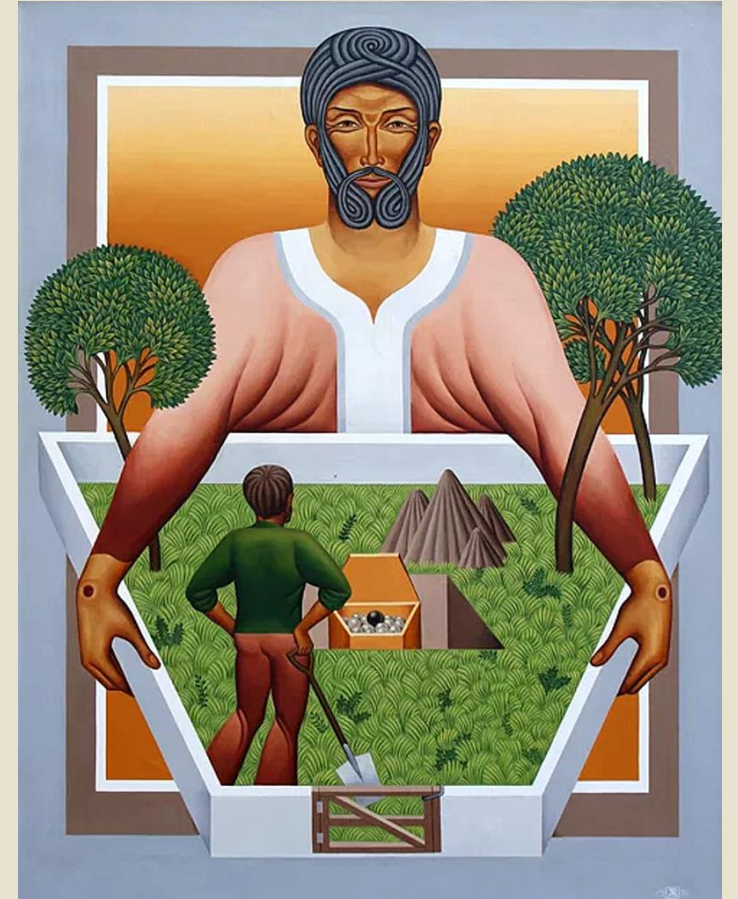
Sermon



Parable of the Yeast
Peter Koenig, 1975



Parable of the Yeast, detail
Peter Koenig, 1975



Treasure in the Field
Peter Koenig

+ OFFERING AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

**Holy One,
receive these offerings as you receive our lives.
Gather our false starts and uncertain efforts,
our generosity and our reluctance.
Enliven us with your breath
and make your purposes known,
that our lives might show forth your glory,
for we pray in the name of Jesus
and by the power of your Spirit. Amen.**



Sherry Middlemiss-Brown

HYMN “You Are My All in All” INSERT

[Verse 1]

You are my strength when I am weak
 You are the treasure that I seek
 You are my all in all
 When I fall down you pick me up
 When I am dry You fill my cup
 You are my all in all

[Chorus]

Jesus Lamb of God
 Worthy is your name
 Jesus Lamb of God
 Worthy is your name

**May be sung as a canon.*

The expression “all in all,” meaning “everything,” owes much of its endurance in English usage to its appearance in 1 Corinthians 15:28, though many phrases leading up to it here have parallels in Hebrew Scripture. The second section echoes the song to the Lamb in Revelation 5:12.

TEXT and MUSIC: Dennis L. Jernigan, 1990
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JERNIGAN
 8.8.6.D with refrain

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You Are My Strength When I Am Weak 519

You Are My All in All

Capo 5: (C) (G) (Am7) (Em) (C)
 F C Dm7 Am F

You are my strength when I am weak; you are the trea-sure that I

(Dm7) (C) (G7) (C) (G7) (C) (G)
 Gm7 F C7 F C7 F C

seek; you are my all in all. When I fall down, you pick me

(Am7) (Em) (C) (Dm7) (C) (G7) (F) (C)
 Dm7 Am F Gm7 F C7 B^b F

up; when I am dry, you fill my cup; you are my all in all.

(C) (G) (Am7) (Em) (Dm7) (C) (G) (C) (G7)
 F C Dm7 Am Gm7 F C F C7

Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is your name!

(C) (G) (Am7) (Em) (Dm7) (C) (G7) (F) (C)
 F C Dm7 Am Gm7 F C7 B^b F

Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is your name!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION



PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR (ECUMENICAL)

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.



Photograph by Ren Spring 2023

SENDING

Sherry Middlemis-Brown



God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

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How Great Thou Art

O STORE GUD 11.10.11.10 with refrain

Carl Gustav Boberg, 1885

English version: Stuart K. Hine, 1953

Transliteration of Korean: Myung Ja Yue, 1989

Swedish folk melody

Harm. Stuart K. Hine, 1949

1. O Lord my God! when I in awe-some won-der Con-sid-er
2. When through the woods and for-est glades I wan-der And hear the

all the *worlds Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I
birds sing sweet-ly in the trees; When I look down from

hear the *roll-ing thun-der, Thy power through-out the u-ni-verse dis-
loft-y moun-tain gran-deur And hear the brook and feel the gen-tle

Refrain

played; breeze; Then sings my soul, my Sav-ior God, to Thee,

How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my

Sav-ior God, to Thee, How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

3. And when I think that God, His Son
not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burden gladly
bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin;
Refrain

4. When Christ shall come with shout
of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall
fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim, my God,
how great Thou art!
Refrain

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*Original English words were "works" and "mighty."

CHARGE AND BLESSING

Go!—as seed and yeast,
willing to lose your life in the larger purposes of God.
Go!—as fisherfolk and treasure seekers,
pouring out your days in search of hidden grace.

May God, who searches the heart,
Jesus, whose love overcomes all division,
and the Spirit, which helps us in our weakness,
continue to lead you into life
that you may serve with abandon and joy.



POSTLUDE

In His Hand (Medley)

Thomas Dorsey & Mosie Lister/arr. Marilynn Ham

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Are there dilemmas or relationships in which you feel separated from the love of God?

Can you imagine that God might be at work there, bringing life in unexpected ways?

What would change if you were to claim the promise that nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?



What Wondrous Love is This
Mike Moyers

Thanks to:

Presider: Rev. Peter Norland
Musicians: Susie Bykkonen
Greeters: Lois Jambekar
Reader: Lois Jambekar
Prayer Writer: Greg Campbell
Coffee: Sangja Lee and Biruta Lowther

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Additional descriptions can be found at the Art in the Christian Tradition image library, a service of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/>. All images available via Creative Commons 3.0 License.

Serving Next Week August 2, 2026

Greeters: NEEDED
Reader: NEEDED
Prayer Writer: NEEDED
Coffee: NEEDED

Next Sunday's Scriptures

Gen. 32:22-31, Rom. 9:1-5; Matt. 14:13-21



Portage Lake United Church

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) & UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Rooted in the Trinity. Growing in God's Word.
Branching out to those in need. Nourished by many waters.