

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 55:10-13

The Compassion of the LORD

**“10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
12 “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”**

55:10-11 Whether or not we understand the ways of the Lord, we can trust that His Word is true and will do what it says. Luther: “He is speaking of ways and thoughts which have to do with the Word.... Rain and snow are not useless, but they *water* the earth, *giving seed to the sower*. The rain can achieve everything for the earth.... When we experience the absence of rain, we see what the earth produces. So He takes away the glory of the earth and shows that it is not the earth that does it but that it is accomplished by the rain. So our building and promotion of the church is not the result of our works but of the Word of God which we preach” (AE 17:257–58). “This is all because of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word, which no one can praise enough. For it has, and is able to do, all that God is and can do” (LC IV 17). (TLSB)

55:10 *rain and snow* – They water the earth in order to replenish it. These elements can sometimes be the cause of great destruction and flooding, but here they are considered blessings. Rain is life giving, and snow is occasionally used in the OT as a symbol of purity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

God’s Word comes from Him like the rain and snow from heaven. (PBC)

come down from heaven – In the context of weather, this simply refers to the sky. Here it may also serve as a parallel to heaven the place where God reside, from which his Word comes down. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

Yahweh’s transcendence is accented in 55:8-9; here he announces his immanence. Yahweh’s Word comes down from heaven and goes forth into the world to accomplish his gracious plan. This is true of Scripture, and preeminently pertain to the Word incarnate Jesus Christ. He is the eternal Word and God, the agent of creation (Jn. 1:1-3), who became flesh (Jn. 1:14) to reveal the unseen God: “the only-begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known” (Jn. 1:18). Jesus is the Word sent down from heaven to be the bread of life for the world (Jn. 6:32-35). (CC)

do not return there. Before the rain and the snow are again drawn up into the sky as mist (Jb 36:27), they achieve the purpose for which they were sent. (TLSB)

water the earth – This carries with it the sense of saturation and being abundantly satisfied. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

making it bring forth and sprout – It begins the growth process. Note that it is a process. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

When rain and snow come down, they water the ground and make it bud and flourish. When God’s Word comes to sinners, it too works. (PBC)

There is a tangible point of contact between God, the merciful one and the sinner, the penitent one. That point of contact is the word of God. Here God deigns to explain how His word is as though it had built-in quality of “self-fulfilling energy.” That divine word is dynamic. It is sent forth by the Lord as a sort of messenger, who has specific commission. In a strikingly simple and telling comparison the Lord shows how He operates. His Word is like the rain and the snow that come down and stay in the earth on which they fell; and they moisten and fructify the earth, making things to stir with hidden energy and to sprout, so that the eternal cycle of seed-time and harvest fulfills itself, and new seed is provided for the man that sows and for the man who needs bread to eat. (Leupold)

55:11 *my word.*† Such as the promises of vv. 3, 5, 12. The word is viewed as a messenger also in 9:8; Ps 107:20. Cf. Jn 1:1. (CSB)

The Word is no echo devoid of results. The Word always brings about what God wants done (45:23; 46:10–11; Ps 33:9; Jer 1:9–10; Mt 13:3–8, 18–23; Heb 4:12). (TLSB)

God’s Word is more powerful than armies, treaties, chariots, horses, as well as every other human might. Only his Word directs history, and this proves that he alone is the true God. The centurions confession echoes this same confidence in God’s Word made flesh in Jesus: “only say the word and my servant will be healed” (Mt. 8:8). (CC)

Whether or not the Israelites understand the ways of Yahweh (Is. 55:8-9) They can trust that his Word is true and will do what it says (e.g., 1 Sam 9:6; 1 Ki. 13:1-3; 2 Ki. 10:10; 14:25; 23:15-20). And whether or not they trust it, God will still bring it to pass in the person of his Son. He who came once in humility and weakness will come again in glory as the victorious rider called “the Word of God” (Rev. 19:13). (CC)

God makes contact with sinners through His Word. The Word comes from God, who authors it and sends it across time and space to the sinner. It will accomplish what God desire and that is the salvation of his people. God assures us in these verses that His Word is effective. It is His Word because it goes out of His mouth and returns to Him. As His Word, it is powerful. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us, “The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (4:12) (PBC)

God has promised to work through the external Word. God has simply chosen the Word as the means through which He has promised to work. These verses emphasize the encouragement of verse 2 and 3. There God invited sinners to listen – listen, give ear, and hear. The phrase “give ear” means to stretch out the ears, to strain them to catch the words. None of this should surprise us when we realize what God’s Word can do. Whenever anyone thinks that he or she can do without hearing the Word, such a person discards the way God works within us. (PBC)

We also say that His Word is true because it comes from God. God gave His Word by inspiration, and His Word cannot lie because God cannot lie. As we read the words written by Isaiah, we can be confident that they are the very words of God. Throughout the prophecy, Isaiah noted that what he wrote had been revealed to him and that he had received his revelation from God (for example, 1:1; 2:1; 5:9; 6:1; 8:11). Jeremiah and the others prophets made the same claim. The apostle Paul wrote, “This what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:13). And Peter

summarized the centuries of God's proclamation by reminding us, "Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). (PBC)

shall not return to empty – It will not come back empty-handed or without fulfilling expectations.

Succeed – It will accomplish what God desire and that is the salvation of his people. (CSB)

Hebrew 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

"Get er done" – "Just do it" – Change agent – Life changing encounter

Notes from Isaiah 40:12, 26 are found below:

40:12 *measured the waters*. See Job 28:25; 38:8. In Job 38–41 the Lord overwhelms Job with a description of his greatness. (CSB)

marked off the heavens. See 48:13. (CSB)

Someone has estimated that the world's oceans contain 340 quintillion gallons of water. Scientists now "mark off the heavens," measuring the universe at 30 billion light years, a figure almost certain to be revised – doubtless, upward. These answers to only two of Isaiah's questions fill us with the kind of awe appropriate for finite creatures who encounter the incredible majesty of our infinite Creator! (LL)

For God, who has again been speaking since verse 8, now spells out in detail exactly how the word that comes forth from his own mouth, and also after that from the mouth of His prophet – how this word, we say, operates. It comes forth like God's mighty creation word, omnipotent and irresistible. Then it does its assigned task. At this point the figure of a messenger enters upon the scene: the word of God is such a messenger. He does not return with a mission unaccomplished. When he reappears he has finished what it pleased God to send him for. The task laid upon it has been successfully accomplished. Though this description always applies to the saving word of the gospel wherever it is sent forth, in this particular case the return from Babylon Captivity seems to be specifically thought of. But the efficacy of the word of forgiveness as outline in verses 8-10, is also not to be lost sight of. (Leupold)

40:26 *created*. See vv. 21–22 and notes. (CSB)

brings out. The Hebrew for this expression is used for bringing forth the constellations in Job 38:32. (CSB)

starry host. Also worshiped by the people (see 47:13; Jer 19:13). (CSB)

each by name. See Ps 147:4. (CSB)

Amazing, isn't it! According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, "with large telescopes astronomers can photograph over thirty billion stars. And we think there must be billions more beyond the reach of our

most powerful telescopes.” Not only is He able to name each one but also brings out each one every night.

One of the realms that is under His control is “the host of heaven.” What makes this comparison all the more meaningful is the fact that especially in the land of the Babylonians, where the children Israel had been in bondage, the heavenly bodies were regarded astrologically, as controlling the affairs of men, that transpired down here on earth. Their control of these affairs was absolute, far beyond that of the gods themselves. Not so in the religion of Israel. There they appeared first of all merely as a part of the creation of God. “Who created these?” allows for only one answer: the God whom Israel worshipped. And as they once originated with Him, so they forever remain under His control, His, “who brings forth their host by number.” The spectacle of the starry skies, night after night, is, frequently speaking, nothing other than a case where the Almighty Maker of the universe brings them out as a shepherd brings forth his flock. Besides, the count is made, as it were, night after night, and the sum-total remains the same invariably. The figure may be regarded as blending into another one at this point: the Lord of this heavenly host is a shepherd, who calls forth these sheep of His, night for night, as the shepherd, who calls forth His sheep one by one out of the fold. As it were, in His astronomy He has them all named from the time when they were created and He may be thought of as remembering their name. It is not due to the laws of nature and their normal operation that the stars all appear nightly. It is rather the “result of the greatness of His might and the abundance of His strength” that “not one of them is ever missing.” The utmost simplicity of argument is blended with the greatest of insight in this illustration. (Leupold)

not one ... missing. See 34:16 and note. (CSB)

55:12 *go out in joy.*† As the Israelites did at their departure from Babylon. (CSB)

Picture of captives returning to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Isaiah 52:9-12, “⁹ Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. ¹¹ Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the LORD. ¹² But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.”

Isaiah 52:9-12 Notes: **52:10** *holy arm.* See 51:9 and note. God’s arm is often associated with redemption and salvation.”

Numbers 11:21-23, “²¹ But Moses said, “Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, ‘I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!’ ²² Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?” ²³ The LORD answered Moses, “Is the LORD’s arm too short?” You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you.” The note 23 says, “The human impossibility is an occasion for demonstrating the Lord’s power.”

Isaiah 52:9-12 Notes: **52:12** *go before you ... be your rear guard.* As he did for the Israelites when they were freed from Egypt. (CSB)

The joy is the bliss of Eden restored. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

Now look at what the Word promises. The gospel holds out joy for sinners and brings peace. God wishes to fill the heart of every sinner with joy and peace, and both come from the Word – peace with God

through Christ and joy in the redemption Christ has accomplished. As this Word of promise comes from God and enters the human heart, it accomplished God's purpose and imparts joy and peace. When Isaiah writes that God's people will go out in joy, his promise is nothing else than gospel. At first he may have in mind the exodus of God's people from Egypt, and certainly he also points to the return of the remnant from the Babylonian captivity. But those exoduses, as joyful and exciting as they were for the people of God, are nothing compared with the final exodus. All God's saints will leave the bondage of sin and death. They will be led to the Jerusalem above. In a single picture, the prophet unites both the return from Babylon and the final deliverance. (PBC)

mountains ... break forth into singing. Nature is called on to join in praise. (CSB)

This celebration is a dangerous witness to Babylon, which would not look fondly on such praise. Indeed, the rulers of this age seek to stop the singing. And if they cannot stop it, they try to pollute it with idolatrous ideology and syncretistic slogan. But Israel will not stop singing, and Yahweh will not stop restoring. He is enthroned on the praise of his people (Ps. 22:3). (CC)

All creation joins in the celebration of God's redemption. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

hands. Branches. The language is figurative (cf. 1Ch 16:33; Ps 98:8; 114:3–6). (CSB)

Anyone hearing the gospel longs for the eternal mansions of heaven. The overwhelming joy of God's people as they experience God's deliverance will spread to the trees and transform the wilderness from thorns and briars to pine trees and myrtles. These words do not refer to literal and physical events. Instead, they paint poetic pictures of the final deliverance of God's people from this bleak world of sorrow, pain, sin and death. (PBC)

The language descriptive of this great event is borrowed from the account of the Exodus from Egyptian bondage. As there was joy then, there shall be joy again. So also this Exodus shall be "in peace," not in panic or in haste but in the full assurance of faith in the God who has often redeemed His people. That figure of a band of men released and coming back free is replaced by the language of a festal procession, where men keep a feast and mark the occasion by jubilant shouts. To catch the exuberance of the festival spirit, we must note that the expressions of joy are so overwhelming that even "the tree of the field" are swept along into it and clap their hands for joy as a king rhythmic accompaniment to the swelling chorus of joy. "The trees of the field" are the wild trees that grow promiscuously here and there; even they feel that they must join this happy chorus. (Leupold)

55:13 *thorn... cypress... briars ... myrtle.* The reverse of the desolation Isaiah had prophesied about earlier (5:6; 32:13). These trees will beautify the desert (cf. 35:1–2). Several are named in 60:13 in connection with adorning the place of God's sanctuary. Acacia wood was used for the tabernacle (Ex 25:5, 10, 13). The pine tree and myrtle replace thorns and briars in 55:13. (CSB)

A picture of paradise restored. In Gn 3:18, the Lord tells Adam that "thorns and thistles" will inhabit the land. Now, because of the Lord's salvation, the plants of Eden will spring up again, and the Lord's people will be invited back into the lush garden. (TLSB)

Luther: "In the church there should not be thorns and brambles, but fruit-bearing, splendid and noble trees, that is, the best kind of Christians." His Word has made us objects of beauty and will lead us to eternal glorification in which even all the nature will participate. (LL)

The thorny curse of Genesis 3:18 is reversed through Him who wore the crown of thorns. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

name for the LORD. Similar to God’s fame in the exodus (see 63:12, 14). (CSB)

everlasting sign. God’s deliverance would never be forgotten. Cf. 19:20; 56:5. (CSB)

Just as creation became corrupt in Adam’s fall (cf Rm 8:19–21), in Christ it will be restored to its pristine beauty, a sign of God’s redemption. (TLSB)

The final section of this verse may have in mind the way ancient kings erected monuments to commemorate their victories and accomplishments. But later kings established different empires and often destroyed or defaced the monuments of their predecessors. Even if those monuments were not destroyed by later kings and emperors, time and weather would turn them into ruins. The deliverance of God’s saints is the great accomplishment of the Lord of grace. No king will ever erase that accomplishment; no number of years or force of nature will turn it into ruins. All that God did to deliver sinners from sin and death stands forever as God’s greatest honor. (PBC)

In highly figurative language that prophet now describes a marvelous transformation even of the vegetation along the road of the Return. Common, worthless desert plants, like the thornbush and the nettle, will along the road of the Return be changed into trees of distinction and beauty, like the cypress and the myrtle. But all this shall serve not for the glorification of Israel, but for the enhancement of the glory of Israel’s God. He shall thereby, as it were erect a memorial (Hebrew: “name”) for Himself, and establish an everlasting sign for Himself, which can never be effaced. The memory of God’s salvation-acts can never be destroyed. (Leupold)

Ch 55 The Lord invites all to seek Him in His Word and to receive His good and satisfying gifts. Though the Lord invites us to listen diligently to His Word, we often listen carelessly or not at all. When we shut out God’s life-giving Word, we are left to labor for that which does not satisfy. Jesus has accomplished the purpose for which He was sent: the pardon for sin, which He won at the cross. He gives abundantly to those from every nation who turn to Him. • Lord God, may Your Word continue to accomplish Your purposes among us and around the world. Teach us to hold Your Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 8:12-17

Heirs with Christ

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 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. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

8:12 *we are debtors.* This does not mean “God has done His part, now what are you going to do for Him? There is no synergism here. We could never even begin to repay God the debt we owe Him. All that we are and have, in both soul and body, is owed to God’s goodness and mercy toward us. Rather, Paul is saying this: Since the Spirit of Christ dwells in you and has brought you new life and peace, it behooves

you now to live by the Spirit. To do anything else would be to reject God's saving work and fall into the condemnation of unbelief. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

Our fallen nature no longer has any claim on us (vv 1–11). Therefore, we are no longer obligated to obey its impulses or satisfy its desires (contrary to the flesh's claim "I owe it to myself"; cf Gal 5:16). (TLSB)

not to the flesh – We dare not go the way of the flesh again, for that would be to nullify His work in us. (Franzmann)

We are no longer in debt to the flesh, obligated to walk in its ways or suffer its end. We are now released to a new and holy obligation, the life lived by faith in Christ. Such a life is lived according to the eternal reality of what God has done and will do for us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

8:13 *you live* – To live according to the sinful nature is to live always on the verge of death. It is to dance at the edge of the pit of hell, to dangle one foot in the grave. To walk according to the flesh is to be headed straight for a death that never ends, a death that is just around the corner and that hangs over the head like the sword of Damocles. Every deed of the flesh is always flirting with disaster. Paul's words are a warning to all those who would minimize the seriousness of the works of the sinful nature. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

A lifestyle marked by personal refusal to repudiate sin or "renounce the Devil and all his works and all his ways" (Rite of Baptism, *LSB*, pp 268–71). (TLSB)

you will die – It is not so much that God will make them die as it is that they will bring death on themselves, they will throw themselves into the pit by their own doing. This the inevitable outcome of their life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

by the Spirit – Through the power or agency of the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

put to death – Gk indicates ongoing action, as in extracting a bad tooth (cf Gal 5:4; Mk 9:43–47). Luther "taught that these remnants of original sin [after Baptism] are not, by nature, adiaphora in people, but that we need Christ's grace so that they are not counted against us as sin. And, to put them to death [mortify them], we need the Holy Spirit" (Ap II 45). (TLSB)

deeds of the body – "The practices of the body," therefore is synonymous with "the works of the sinful nature" and carries with it the idea of an ongoing behavior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

The body and its members are the instruments, so to speak, by which our rebellious will acts. (TLSB)

of the body – "Body" is, of course to be understood as "mortal body" or "body of death" (7:24), the body under the power and curse of sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

you will live – To live according to the new man is to put to death these deeds of the mortal body, to battle the old Adam and its desires and actions. And how is this done? "By the Spirit." We cannot do this "by our own reason or strength" but only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are drawn back to our Baptism, in which our flesh was crucified with Christ and we are raised up to a new life with Him. To put to death the deeds of the body is to return to our Baptism in penitence and faith, that the sinful nature may be "drowned and die with all sins and evil desire, and the a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever" (Small Catechism, Baptism IV). It is to hear the preaching of God's holy Law, which slays the old Adam, and His holy Gospel, which raises up with

Christ. It is to receive the true body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament, that our sin may be taken away and that He may dwell in us to live in faith toward God and love toward the neighbor. This is the work of the Holy Spirit by which you will live. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

8:14-17 Paul brings up a number of new topics in 8:14–17 which mark it off as a unique section.

8:14 *are led by the Spirit* – Led, as by the hand of a beloved and trusted father, not as shackled prisoners or sternly disciplined troops. “Good works are evidences of [the Spirit’s] presence and indwelling” (FC Ep IV 15). (TLSB)

sons of God. God is the Father of all in the sense that he created all and his love and providential care are extended to all (see Mt 5:45). But not all are his children. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews of his day, “You belong to your father, the devil” (Jn 8:44). People become children of God through faith in God’s unique Son (see Jn 1:12–13), and being led by God’s Spirit is the hallmark of this relationship. (CSB)

Expression broadly means “children of God” (v 16; Gal 3:26; cf 2Co 6:18). (TLSB)

God is the Father of all in the sense that He created all and sustains all life. But those “led by the Spirit” are called children or sons of God. Membership in God’s family is by grace alone – the gift of God (cf. Eph 2:8-9; John 1:12-13). Paul prepares the reader to understand that since we are sons of God we can count on our inheritance, and our hope will not disappoint us (Rom. 5:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

8:15 *spirit of slavery.* The Holy Spirit does not place us back under the Law’s terrifying condemnation. (TLSB)

adoption of sons. The underlying word here is “adoption” (see NIV text note). It occurs four other times in the NT (v. 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5 [see note there]; Eph 1:5). Adoption was common among the Greeks and Romans, who granted the adopted son all the privileges of a natural son, including inheritance rights. Christians are adopted sons by grace; Christ, however, is God’s Son by nature. (CSB)

Those baptized into Christ (ch 6) receive full status as God’s children. (TLSB)

We are not enslaved to a new Law, but we have received the status of children, adopted by God into His family. The word “adoption” indicates a new family relation with all of its rights, privileges, and responsibilities. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

Abba, Father. Expressive of an especially close relationship to God. (CSB)

Aram “Father.” Conveys childlike intimacy and confidence (Mk 14:36; Gal 4:6). Perhaps an expression from the baptismal liturgy. Jesus gave us the privilege of addressing God as our dear Father (“Abba!”) when He gave us the Lord’s Prayer (cf Mt 6:9–13). (TLSB)

Aramaic “father,” comparable with English “pap” or “dad”. Conveys childlike intimacy and confidence (Mk. 14:36; Rm. 8:15; Gal, 4:6) Expresses the deep loving relationship Jesus had with the Father and which believers now share. Ab or abi are also used to form proper names e.g. Abraham. (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

Being sons and daughters of God, we are able to call God “Abba, Father,” by the Spirit dwelling within. Jews thought the Aramaic word too intimate to apply to God. But no word expresses so well this

understanding of God. The one word makes a whole prayer in itself. It is evidence of the Spirit's groaning within (Rom 8:26), expressing all human searching and longing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

We come before God in familiarity and intimacy. We come before God in prayer as His dearly beloved children, not afraid of Him, but confident of His love and goodness. Small Catechism: "With these words [Our Father who art in heaven] God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father." In the early church, new Christians were first given to speak the words of the Our Father immediately after their Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

8:16 *bears witness with our spirit.* The inner testimony of the Holy Spirit to our relationship to Christ. (CSB)

The Spirit causes us to believe in our gracious Father, to whom Christ has given us access (Jn 14:6; Eph 3:11–12; see AE 25:358–60). (TLSB)

summarturei means "to confirm, to testify" in support of someone. This is not testimony of the Spirit apart from the Word. Rather, it is the very testimony of the Word by which faith and prayer are brought forth in us. Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

Because God's Spirit bears witness to our spirit, we belong to God as dear children. We can call Him "Abba Father." It is not a reasoned discovery of our intelligence but a response to what God has revealed to us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

God's children. The same as "sons of God," terms that in the NT are synonymous. (CSB)

teknon expresses the relation of nature and indicates community of life. In other words, we don't merely have the status of children, but we actually share in the life and nature of the Son of God as members of His body. We are partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

8:17 *heirs.* Those who have already entered, at least partially, into the possession of their inheritance. (CSB)

Our full status as God's children makes us beneficiaries of everything Christ possesses. We are truly His co-heirs (see Luther's "glorious exchange"; AE 51:316). (TLSB)

fellow heirs with Christ. Everything really belongs to Christ, but by grace we share in what is his. (CSB)

As true children of God, we are also heirs of God, inheritors of all that Christ won for us by His death and resurrection. "We are joint heirs with Christ." Everything that belongs to Him belongs to us too. We have the same status with the Father as Jesus does. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you though His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). Therefore, we will hear the voice of Jesus say on the Last Day, "Come you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world (Matthew 25:34). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 2)

if indeed we share in his sufferings.† The Greek construction used here does not set forth a condition but states a fact. An alternate translation could be "since indeed ..." The meaning, then, is not that there is

some doubt about sharing Christ's glory. Rather, despite the fact that Christians presently suffer, they are assured a future entrance into their inheritance. (CSB)

As Christ suffered, Christians will, and even must, suffer because of their allegiance to Him (2Co 1:5; Php 3:10; cf Col 1:24; 2Tm 2:11–12). (TLSB)

glorified with Him. As Christ entered “into His glory” (Lk 24:26), so shall we—with joy (1Pt 4:13)! (TLSB)

8:12–17 The Holy Spirit leads us to trust confidently that we are heirs, privileged to call God “our Father” and to receive eternal glory at the end of present suffering. The path to glory, however, is not an easy street, for it entails daily rejection of personal sins. When God’s judgment frightens us, the Spirit assures us that God loves us in Christ. • Lord, by Your Spirit, comfort us when we are afraid. Lead us to see You as our dear Father and to see ourselves as Your dear children. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

The Parable of the Sower

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear.

13:1-3a The crowds gather around Jesus, so he gets in a boat and takes a seated posture, a posture of teaching. However, Jesus uses a rather obscure teaching form; he speaks to them in many *parabolais*. A parable is a short discourse that makes a comparison expressing a complete thought. It closely resembles a riddle. The evangelist feels the need to include its interpretation later. This is not the most straightforward way of teaching. Even the disciples later in v 10 question Jesus about his method. Jesus replies that he is fulfilling the judgment prophecy of Isaiah (Is 6:9–10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:1 *that same day* – This was to be one of the busiest days of which we have any knowledge in the life of our Lord, from the time when he was besieged by the multitudes upon his return to Capernaum until late in the same day, when he rested his weary head in the rocking bed of a storm-tossed ship on the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus’ third discourse followed immediately after He experienced rejection from “this evil generation” (12:45). (TLSB)

Matthew intends for his hearer/readers to associate the teaching offered in chapter 13 with what has immediately preceded, for he narrates that Jesus’ teaching in parables happens “on that day” (13:1) immediately after some Galilean Pharisees had engaged in hostile confrontations with Jesus (12:22-45). Even more significantly, the crowds have failed to grasp His true identity or be His true family (12:23,

46-50). These last incidents are only further developments in the growing opposition to Jesus' ministry that has been building since 11:2. (CC)

This narrative development dovetails perfectly into the interpretation of the Sower that Jesus gives to His disciples. The modern (but not the postmodern!) readers breathes something of a sigh of relief – we know what this parable is about. Jesus is answering the question of why, despite His ongoing ministry of words and deeds, so many people in Israel are not responding in faith and discipleship. (CC)

out of house – The owner is not named but may have been Peter (v. 36; 8:14). (TLSB)

13:2 *got into a boat* – With this arrangement even more people could hear Him.

1 Timothy 2:4, “who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

sat down – In biblical times, teachers taught while sitting (5:1; 24:3). (TLSB)

crowd stood – Those assembled onshore. (TLSB)

13:3–9 See vv. 18–23 for the interpretation of this first parable. (CSB)

13:3b-8 The *speirōn*, regardless of the soil's condition, sows seed on the earth. The seed falls (*epesen*) from above on the road, the rock with a little soil on it, the soil where thorns grow, and finally the good soil. Only in the good soil does the seed produce fruit in various quantities. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:3 *parables* – Our word “parable” comes from the Greek *parabole*, which means “a placing beside”—and thus a comparison or an illustration. Its most common use in the NT is for the illustrative stories that Jesus drew from nature and human life. The Synoptic Gospels contain about 30 of these stories. John's Gospel contains no parables but uses other figures of speech. (CSB)

Matthew's first use of this term, which refers to short stories or wise sayings in a variety of literary forms, including proverbs, maxims, allegories, fables, comparisons, and riddles (cf. Ps. 78:2; Ezk 17:2). All of Jesus' parables here focus on the working of God's kingdom (cf 6:9). Four parables in this chapter were spoken to the crowd (vv 3–9; 24–35) and four to the disciples (vv 36–52). (TLSB)

An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

All these parables teach important truths concerning the kingdom of God, and that is true of Jesus' parables in general. The kingdom of God is not a visible earthly organization occupying a specific amount of territory in this world. The kingdom of God is God's dominion, His ruling activity. God rules in the heart of His believers through the power of His Word. He calls people by means of the gospel. By the power of that same gospel He creates saving faith in Christ in people's hearts. With that same power He strengthens and preserves that faith and moves people to produce fruits of faith, works that keep His commandments and express genuine love for God and one's neighbor. (PBC)

sowed some seeds – Fields in Palestine were quite small plots. The seed was cast by hand. There were no fences.

Jesus interpreted this parable of the sower in vv 18–23. Some modern interpreters have argued that parables are best interpreted by reducing them to a single point or truth. However, the way Jesus

interpreted and applied some of His own parables (e.g., vv 36–43, 49–50) should guide how we interpret and apply them today. (TLSB)

This sower, unlike other sowers, casts seeds without apparent regard for where it lands. That is how it is with the reign of God in Christ; grace trumps efficiency. What is important is the bearing of fruit, not a certain amount of it. (CC)

Points of Comparison – 1) As the seed encountered different kinds of soil, so the Word of the Kingdom encounters different hearers. 2) As the seed encountered difficulty and yet produced a harvest, so will the Word of the Kingdom produce a harvest.

Central Truths – 1) Take heed how you hear. 2) In spite of difficulty, the Word will do its work.

13:4 *birds came and devoured them* – The birds immediately devoured the seed that fell along the path. The seed here did not germinate.

13:5 *rocky ground* – Not ground covered with small stones, but shallow soil on top of solid rock. There was only a very thin layer of soil but it did germinate. (CSB)

13:6 *sun rose* – During the growing season in Palestine the sun get quite hot.

They were scorched – ekaumatistha – This denotes a burning of the seed from without.

They withered – exarantha – This signifies a drying up from within. The reason both scorched and withered are given is that the seed had no root despite the fact that it had germinated.

13:7 *Thorns grew up and choked them* – This means that the thistles grew faster than the plants which came from the seed.

13:8 *good soil* – This went deep.

13:9 *has ears let him hear* – Cf 11:15. Jesus meant this agricultural example to have a deeper spiritual meaning, which His hearers needed to carefully consider. (TLSB)

Jesus exhorted. If you are able to hear, then really listen, take to heart, believe, and obey. (PBC)

Jesus uses this maxim first when teaching in 11:14–15 that John the Baptist was the returning Elijah, and it is in the context of violence against the coming Kingdom that it is used. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:1–9 Jesus earlier told His disciples: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (9:37). This parable gives encouragement that when a laborer faithfully sows the seed, a plentiful harvest may follow, even if some seed goes to waste. We are tempted to give up a task when we experience little success. That is also true of our efforts to share the Gospel. Let us not grow weary in doing good, knowing that at the right time we will reap, because God provides the harvest (Gal 6:9). • Give me patience, dear Lord, when the tasks of life seem hard and unending. Amen. (TLSB)

18 “Hear then the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a

while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

13:18 *hear then* – Jesus will interpret vv 3–8 for His disciples. (TLSB)

“Listen,” He says, for that is what the whole parable is about – listening, listening to the Word of God. Some hear but don’t really listen. Some hear and listen, but only for a little while. Some hear and listen for a while, but imagine that they need not give their undivided attention to what God is telling them. They are too easily distracted. Some keep on hearing and listening; they grow in faith and in sanctification. They produce the fruits of faith in great abundance. (PBC)

While Jesus simply tells (*laleō*) the rest of the people the parable, he says to his disciples, “You therefore hear!” (*akousate*). The imperative verb form emphasizes the forcefulness of opening deaf and unbelieving ears to hearing and understanding. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

Joshua1:8, “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

the word of the kingdom – In Hebrew it is called the “Torah.” While “Torah” is usually translated “law,” its root meaning is much broader. It means “instruction” or “teaching.” It can refer to all of God’s revealed teaching in the OT – His laws, His promises, the prophetic history of His acts among His people. (PBC)

meditate – The Hebrew word for “meditate” means literally to “murmur to oneself in a low voice” (as Orthodox Jews commonly do to this day). We miss something if none of our Bible reading is oral.

Luke 2:19, “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart..”

treasured – Her treasures were not any earthly relics: a bit of straw from the manger, the cloth in which the baby was wrapped, or one of the shepherd’s staffs left behind. Her scrapbook of this event was carried within her heart. (PBC)

“Kept” KJV – “She continued guarding” is the imperfect, which stands out among all the aorists; Mary’s impressions were enduring. She said nothing – it was all too sacred, too miraculous for her. (Lenski)

pondered – She turned over again and again in her mind what had happened and was amazed at what a great thing God had done. (PBC)

The present participle with its durative sense matches the durative imperfect verb. The idea in the participle is that of throwing things together, comparing; letting one explain and add to another. We catch a glimpse of the depth of Mary’s character, it was calm and deep, spiritually receptive and strong, steady and persevering in grace. The Greek conceives the heart as being the seat not merely of the emotions but of the entire personality, will, mind, and emotions. Mary’s entire personality was involved. (Lenski)

Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”

dwell – The present tense of the imperative “let dwell” points to a continual presence of the Word. It is not merely to be read, commented on, and the like, but it is to be internalized so that it is continually

present. Believers are to live, think, and exist in relation to the Word of Christ. It is to empower and norm everything about their existence. (CC)

richly – As a cognate of *ploutos* “richness” a term used by Paul almost exclusively to describe the splendor of the way of salvation, here not only means “a great deal” but also “with great benefit,” for the riches of salvation will come through the employment of Christ’s Word. (CC)

Acts 17:11, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

eagerness – The complete eagerness is shown by the fact that they engage in this activity everyday. (Sacra)

examined – To inspect or scrutinize (a person, thing, or situation) in detail, observe or analyze carefully. (Dictionary)

2 Timothy 3:15-17, “¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. From "Grace to Receive the Word" (Page 308 in LSB)

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

Writer Charles Swindoll once found himself with too many commitments in too few days. He got nervous and tense about it. "I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions through the day," he recalled in his book *Stress Fractures*. "Before long, things around our home started reflecting the patter of my hurry-up style. It was becoming unbearable.

"I distinctly remember after supper one evening, the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day. She began hurriedly, 'Daddy, I wanna tell you somethin' and I'll tell you really fast.'

"Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, 'Honey, you can tell me -- and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.'" "I'll never forget her answer: 'Then listen slowly.'"

Bits & Pieces, June 24, 1993, pp. 13-14.

How good a listener are you?

- 1) Since you think about four times faster than a person usually talks, do you use this time to think about other things while you're keeping track of the conversation?
- 2) Do you listen primarily for facts rather than ideas when someone is speaking?
- 3) Do you avoid listening to things you feel will be too difficult to understand?
- 4) Can you tell from a person's appearance and delivery that there won't be anything worthwhile said?
- 5) When someone is talking to you do you appear to be paying attention when you're not?

- 6) Do certain words and phrases prejudice you so you cannot listen objectively?
- 7) When listening are you distracted by outside sights and sounds?

Leadership, Vol.1, No. 4, p. 99.

Good listening is like tuning in a radio station. For good results, you can listen to only one station at a time. Trying to listen to my wife while looking over an office report is like trying to receive two radio stations at the same time. I end up with distortion and frustration. Listening requires a choice of where I place my attention. To tune into my partner, I must first choose to put away all that will divide my attention. That might mean laying down the newspaper, moving away from the dishes in the sink, putting down the book I'm reading, setting aside my projects.

Robert W. Herron, *Homemade*, June, 1987.

13:19 *word* – Note the sixfold repetition in vv 19–23. (TLSB)

of the kingdom – Gospel message that Christ is the messianic King who rules (4:17; 9:35). God's rule springs from His Word. (TLSB)

does not understand it – *sunietos* – means to receive, accept or take it in. They rejected it. Jesus is picturing the ancient and modern Pharisees noted in verses 14-15. Luther says: "it went in one ear and out the other."

Jesus uses the examples of three different soil conditions to explain why hearers failed to understand the Word, something Isaiah also experienced (vv 14–15). (TLSB)

evil one – Satan. (TLSB)

sown along the path – The seed that falls on the hard ground of the footpath points to those people who go through the motions of hearing the Word of God but almost immediately let the devil take it away from them. The devil calls God a liar, and many believe his lies and go with him to eternal destruction. God wanted to save them and invited them into His kingdom, but they simply declined His gracious invitation. They preferred to live this life according to the ignorance and evil lusts of their sinful flesh. God does not drive or drag anyone into His kingdom by force. Christ died for everybody and redeemed the whole world, but those who despise His salvation and reject Him rightfully remain in Satan's kingdom for time and eternity. (PBC)

The Word is heard but quickly rejected. "Those fussy spirits are to be rebuked who, after they have heard a sermon or two, find hearing more sermons to be tedious and dull. They think that they know all that well enough and need no more instruction" (LC I 99). (TLSB)

Jesus reveals that the seed is the Word of the Kingdom and that the soil or path is the heart of the hearer. The birds represent the evil one (*ponēros*) who carries the Word away from those who do not understand. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

He wants His hearers to know that this stands for the sad fact that there is a battle going on for the lives of men and women and children and that sometimes Satan simply takes away the message about the reign of God that Jesus is proclaiming and His hearers never understand it or even begin to believe it. (CC)

The first soil, the wayside, is the class which, without further ado, repudiates the Word, the indifferent who have hardened their hearts through the steadfast service of sin. Among them are the self-righteous Pharisees then and now. (Ylvisaker)

13:20-21 Jesus identifies the rocky ground as the hearer who first receives the Word with joy but is scandalized (*skandalizetai*) into falling away when tribulation and persecution from the world come because of it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:20 *on rocky ground* – The shallow ground describes the person who gladly hears the Word of God and believes it. He is very enthusiastic about being received into God’s kingdom and into membership in a Christian congregation. He expects that His Christian faith will exempt him from the troubles that other people experience in this life. He looks for success and prosperity, good health and uninterrupted happiness. (Sad to say, there are some false prophets who lure people into their churches by giving them such false hopes.) But then reality strikes. The troubles that are an inescapable part of living as sinful people in a sinful world come into this person’s life. He even faces some forms of persecution, some hardships that are inflicted upon him because of his Christian faith. He was unprepared for such developments, and he gives up his faith without much of a struggle. (PBC)

A Faith that is small and weak saves a person for heaven just as well as a strong, heroic faith saves. But we must not be satisfied with a weak faith because it can so easily be snuffed out. We rather want to put on the whole armor of God, so that we are fully protected against anything that might threaten to destroy our faith. You might want to refresh your memory on this matter by reading Ephesians 6:10-18. (PBC)

receives it with joy – This pictures an emotional hearer whose thrill is very short-lived.

The second soil is the populace in its wild enthusiasm for the Savior, soon a thing of the past; today “Hosanna!” and tomorrow “Crucify him!” These are the emotional, superficial, sentimentalists who are easily impressed by the Word, who are moved to tears and make good resolutions. But they would retain at the same time the contrariness of an unbroken heart, and therefore they lapse again into the sleep of death and destruction. As long as our attitude toward the Word consists merely in easily aroused, pleasing emotions, all is well, but when the Word presents its demands, that is, to become a determining factor in the heart, exacting obedience in the hour of trials, then is encountered the opposition of the unbroken, unregenerate heart, and the newly created life of promise sickens and dies. (Ylvisaker)

13:21 The Word is heard but does not produce a vigorous root because the soil lacks depth. (TLSB)

13:22 *choke the word* – Once the things of this world mean more than what the Word offers, the person is in danger.

The thorn-ridden ground, Jesus says, is the hearer overtaken by the cares of the world associated with the curse spoken to our first parents. Sin’s deceitfulness (*apatē*), to which Eve succumbed, and the idolatrous flesh choke the plant before it can mature and bear fruit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

Thorns represent “the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.” The seed sown among thorns grows for a while but never really thrives. This kind of hearer is still too concerned about material things and the problems of this life. He has great difficulty trusting God to provide for all his bodily needs. He imagines that if he can only accumulate enough money and all the things that money can buy, then he will be perfectly happy. If he gets rich and still is not happy, he imagines that the solution is to get even richer, and he never has enough. Mammon is his god, and he becomes Mammon’s slave, so he never produces fruits of faith to glorify God. (PBC)

The third soil is that group which like the rich young man, has a certain longing for salvation, but which, at the same time, desires to retain the old worldly spirit in its various ramifications, those who would have what is of heaven and of the earth, but who are in reality of an earthly mind. When they fail to experience, contrary to their expectations, only pleasure in their Christianity, when renunciation and suffering call at their door, then these trails become to them a rock of offense which hinders further progress and leads to a fall from grace. (Ylvisaker)

13:23 *understands* – Understanding the Word is the Father’s gift to His children (v 11; 11:25). (TLSB)

bears fruit –Finally, Jesus explains that the beautiful, or good, (*kalēn*) soil is the person who hears and comprehends (*sunieis*) the Word. From these hearers will come abundance in various multiples. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

bears fruit and yields – The seed of the Word of God is good and will produce abundant fruit. (TLSB)

Finally we come to the good seed that falls into good soil. Some hear the Word and understand and believe it, and they produce abundant fruits of faith. The most precious fruit is the sharing of God’s Word with others. In this way the seed of the Word literally is multiplied 30 or 60 or 100 times or more. God gives us His Word to believe and share. (PBC)

The fourth soil represents the proper receptive attitude as in the disciples. In them the seed produces fruit; but there is a difference in the fruit in accordance with the dissimilarity in gifts, in qualifications, in faithfulness in the use of the Word, conditions in life, etc. When reference is made to the “good soil,” it is evident to any one familiar with the Scriptures that this is not a word-picture of the soil as it is found by the Word. The Word itself must, through its divine and inherent power, produce the good soil. Of unwilling hearts it must create hearts that are willing, as our Confession declares. (Ylvisaker)

This parable is not telling us that people are inherently different and that some simply are more receptive to the Word of God when they hear it. The Bible makes it very clear that by nature all of us are dead in trespasses and sins, totally incapable of responding at all to God’s Word, for it is foolishness to natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14). When people hear the gospel and believe it, that is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. Saving faith is a gift of God. On the other hand, when some hear the gospel and reject it, that is entirely their own fault. That doesn’t sound reasonable or fair to our human minds, but that is what God says, and we leave it at that. Any attempts on our part to logically explain this mystery of “why some are saved and not others” only leads to our denial or rejection of other clear Bible truths. So we simply marvel at the grace of God that saved us when we were as bad as all the rest of sinful humanity, and we look for ways to express our deep gratitude to our gracious God. (PBC)

13:18–23 Jesus explains the parable of the sower for His disciples. He wants them to understand that as they go out and preach the Gospel, not all the seed they sow will produce fruit. But what keeps a farmer sowing and a disciple proclaiming is Jesus’ promise that some seed will produce a wonderful harvest. The lesson for us is obvious: the blessings of God’s kingdom come through the seed of God’s Word. • O divine Sower, keep me from becoming discouraged as I entrust my life to Your Word and seek to share Your message of salvation with others. Amen. (TLSB)