

FAITH @ HOME

Week of July 12, 2020

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

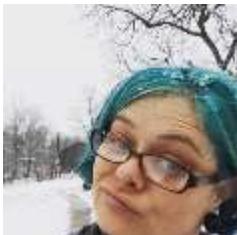
ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

REFLECT: Jesus loves to tell stories about the things he sees around him. Birds, flowers, fields. He tells stories about all of them. Jesus tells his friends about how the farmers sow wheat—they till up their fields and just kind of throw the seeds out there—and then they wait. Not all the seeds end up turning into wheat—some of them don't grow, some grow too fast a die, some get eaten by critters. But the ones that do grow are enough to make so much flour and bake so much bread and feed so many people. You and me and everyone we know, we are like those seeds. Jesus is the farmer and he has put us in his field to grow. When we listen to Jesus and the people who love us, when we are kind, when we feed our bodies good things, we are like healthy wheat. Jesus can harvest the healthy wheat we grow in our hearts and help us keep each other strong and healthy and happy.

RESPOND: Head out to find a five-gallon bucket, some potting soil, and seeds for a salad mix. With your little, fill the bucket and sow some seeds. Water them in, place them in a well-lit area in your home, and watch the salad grow (you will have sprouts in 2-3 days—much quicker than wheat!). You should be able to snack from it in a week or so, but this may provide fertile conversation for weeks to come!

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: RACHEL JONES



Rachel Jones is the associate editor for Forward Movement. She and her husband live on a farm with a dog, too many cats, several rabbits, and a flock of very opinionated chickens.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Isaiah 55:10-13

REFLECT: When it rains, do you go outside to play by jumping in puddles? Have you ever made a snowman or a snow angel? Many people dislike the rain and the snow. On rainy and snowy days, I try to remember how much we need moisture. In our reading, we see that the rain and the snow have specific purposes. By watering the earth, the snow and rain make sure that trees grow and flowers bloom. This enables us to have food to eat. Both the rain and the snow accomplish their purposes. It is the same way with God's Word. Every time we hear God's Word, we grow and mature in our faith.

RESPOND: Find a passage of scripture that you like and get yourself ready to read it aloud. Before you read, say: "I'm jumping in!" If you are not able to read yet, find someone to read the Bible to you. Both you and your reading buddy can say: "Lord, we're jumping in!"

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: IMANI DRISKELL



Imani Driskell is the Director of Children's, Youth, and Family Ministries at St. Michael's-in-the-Hills Episcopal Church in Toledo, Ohio. Imani was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and is a bagel and pizza enthusiast. She enjoys learning, teaching and speaking about Faith Formation. Her favorite novel is *The Living is Easy* by Dorothy West.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

REFLECT: The parable of the sower is one of the most popular when talking about our faith, which makes sense because we are always growing in our faith! It's always good to take a step back and think: what does our soil look like? Are we feeding it? Are we feeling angry or distant from God, maybe on rocky ground? Has something come into our lives that is standing in the way of our relationship with God? Have we been using the same fertilizer too long and now our soil isn't as nutritious as it once was?

Gardening can be so simple, but still so complicated, just like growing our faith. Going to church seems like the easiest way to grow, right? But, have the words become so routine to you, that you say them without thinking about what you're saying? Carefully read along next time! What about reading the Bible? Now, that sounds daunting or complicated, but something like a weekly or daily devotional makes it more attainable! Why not invite a friend to join you in following along so you can discuss together?

In gardening, there is even a time when we let the soil lay fallow. It's when the soil is left without planting for a time so it can recuperate. Maybe there is so much going on in your life right now that you need to let go of something in order to take care of yourself. What does it look like to rest in your faith so that you can come back and renew it?

RESPOND: Take a piece of paper. Draw a line about a quarter of the way up from the bottom. This is your soil. Draw what is in the soil of your faith. Are there rocks or thorns? Write in the nutrients that are feeding your faith. Now, draw lines coming up from your soil. On top of those lines, write what is being produced in your faith from that soil (examples: supportive community, self-care, serving others, etc.). What are you doing or what has entered into your life because of your faith? You can draw flowers or other plants around these, if you want.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MAGGIE PAUL



Maggie Paul is the Assistant Director for Youth and Family Ministry at Christ Episcopal Church in Charlotte, NC where she focuses on Middle School and relational ministry as well as curriculum. She previously served at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, GA where she developed and implemented a comprehensive Confirmation curriculum. She is very excited to bring aspects of this curriculum to her new parish. As an undergraduate with a passion for youth ministry, she served as a summer camp counselor and Episcopal student center "church mouse," and she continues to use her gifts and talents as a singer and musician to nurture her own journey and inspire others on theirs.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

REFLECT: In his work *Proslogion*, St. Anselm of Canterbury famously set out the work of theology and spiritual growth as “faith seeking understanding.” St. Anselm begins with a trust in God, and then seeks to better understand God, faith, and the spiritual life. Faith, or trust in God, functions as the foundation upon which understanding builds.

In this Gospel parable, Jesus seems to be encouraging us to do the same. Seed, the Word of God, is scattered here and there and everywhere. But unless the ground, our heart, is prepared and cultivated, the seed won't take root. Instead, it will fade away. If we begin with understanding and try to work our way to faith, we'll likely fail, because for Jesus, faith is the foundation, the ground in which we must build and grow.

Faith is the antidote to the rocks, thorns, and birds which seek to rob us of fulfilling spiritual lives. Trust in God is what opens the doors of our hearts. With true faith and open hearts, we will find that our spiritual lives will yield abundantly, “in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” (Matthew 13:8, NRSV)

RESPOND: Is there a part of your faith life that you acknowledge and know you should live deeper into, but for whatever reason neglect? Maybe it's helping the poor and oppressed, maybe it's seeking Christ in all persons (including the ones that annoy you), maybe it's something else entirely. Find a way to live out this aspect of faith, instead of simply thinking about it.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CLAYTON HARRINGTON



Clayton Harrington is the Episcopal Campus Missioner at the University of Georgia. He is also the Rector's Associate for Youth and Young Adult Ministries at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Athens, Georgia. In these roles, Clayton is passionate about the potential of Christian community, worship, and service to empower youth and young adults to grow into the people that God has made them to be. Clayton is a transitional deacon and will be ordained a priest in June 2020 in the Diocese of Atlanta.

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