

Home Service for July 19, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Breathe in and consider what God has done throughout the generations. Breathe out and know that God abides with us in our sufferings and frustrations. Breathe in and dream of what God can do. Breathe out in hope and gratitude for what God will do in worship today.

Call to Worship:

God knows us better than we know ourselves. Even in the darkest places, the light of God's love is there. There is nowhere we can flee from God's presence. In the heavens and in the depths, the Holy One abides with us. We are God's children, serving the Lord from generation to generation. God is the one who keeps promises and who provides for us wherever we go. How awesome is this place! This is God's house and the gateway to the heavens. Amen.

Opening Prayer:

God of grace and love, we rely on Your love extended to us in all ways and at all times, extravagantly and with generosity. We live day by day knowing that Your care and concern is poured out for us in Your provision for our needs and beyond our imagining. You entrust us with the gift of the good news of the Gospel and invite us to be partners in the sharing of the message of grace. Day by day, we realize the many gifts lavished upon us. We come to You to acknowledge and praise You for all Your goodness to us. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we confess that we do not always love our neighbor. We confess that we have despised others, even to the point of hatred. We confess that we have been hurt by others. We confess that forgiveness and reconciliation at times are just impossible for us. We know that nothing is impossible in You. We come to You, seeking healing and wholeness for us. Help us, whenever possible, to live in peace with others, to seek reconciliation and healing and forgiveness. For Your Son came and lived among us, was betrayed and denied, abused and put to death. He rose again and came with the message of peace to those who had denied him and abandoned him. May we walk in his ways. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

For nothing is impossible with God. There is no place you can go, no end of the earth you can run, where God cannot find you. There is nothing on earth or beyond death that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Amen.

Read Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"

¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Prayers of the People:

Summer is just about halfway over. Some of us have been able to travel, to spend special time with family and friends; but for others there is a sameness about this season. It brings pressures to work to provide for our families; it reminds us of the many people who are ill and who are unable to enjoy some of the special delights that this season is supposed to bring. This morning we took a few minutes to name our dear ones and situations of pain and loss as we ask for prayers from this congregation. Some people will remain unnamed because of the anguish we feel about their difficulties. But you are with them, every step of the way, even when they don't feel like you care. You are there with them, offering them peace and hope. We have turned our hearts to you as we silently offer these special people named and those we haven't to your care. Lord, you have heard the cries of our hearts. You see our tears and feel our pain. Be with us all. Give us healing for our broken spirits and bodies, for we ask these things in the name of Jesus, the Master Healer. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 28:10-19a

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it^[a] stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^[b] ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel,^[c] though the city used to be called Luz.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 8:12-25

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.^[a] And by him we cry, “*Abba*,^[b] Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that^[c] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Message

Many times, Jesus taught by using parables, using everyday situations of that time to get his point across. Our gospel lesson speaks to our daily living of our faith, using a parable. Some of Jesus’ parables are hard for us to understand, because we live in a different time and this time, we also are not in a agricultural area and there are no wheat fields for us to see, but I think we all know about weeds. For we find weeds in our gardens and in our lawns.

The parable starts with concerns about the difference between weeds and wheat in a field. Jesus tells a parable about farmer who sowed some wheat seeds into his field. Everything was going well, until one day his servants noticed that some weeds which looked just like the wheat were growing up in the field also. They ran to the owner and asked him about the kinds of seeds that he used. He said that an enemy had sown the bad seed in his field and that he had used good seed. Then the servants, being eager to make the field look good again, asked if they should go and pull out the weeds. But the master says no, because until the weeds and the wheat ripen no one could really tell them apart and they might disturb the good wheat along with trying to pull up the weeds.

He tells them that they should leave the fields alone, and then when the wheat is ready for harvest, the weeds will have bloomed also, and one could tell the

difference. Then the harvesters could come and pull out the weeds and burn them, and gather the harvest of wheat next.

Jesus then explains the parable by saying that the sower or the master is the Son of God, the field is the world, and the good seed are the sons and the daughters of the kingdom of God and the bad seeds or the weeds are the children of the evil one or the devil who sowed them into the field. Jesus then says that you cannot tell the difference between these two groups of people, but when the close of the age comes, and the harvest of the world is ready, then the angels will separate the evil ones from the righteous ones. The evil ones will be burned and the righteous people will live with him for eternity.

This text asks us to judge our own faith life. Not our neighbors, but our own faith life. This parable was not told so that we might go around and judge others and decide who is a weed and who is a wheat. Jesus says loud and clear that is his responsibility, it is the function of the Father and his angels. But the parable is for one to take a close look at his or her life with the understanding that one can judge our own heart and then repent and bear good fruit. So today, we do not want you to look at your neighbor and say, well, pastor is really talking about you. Today's sermon is addressed to each of us individually. It is a time to look at our own sins, at the way one conducts our own life, then make a decision about repentance for your own life and turning around and bearing fruit for Jesus.

Our gospel lesson is asking us whether we are secure in our faith life? Secure in the knowledge that one day a judgment will happen and then will the harvester regard you as a wheat or a weed? Jesus is asking us to look inside and truthfully see our own life. He is telling us that the wheat and weeds look alike till the time of the harvest. By looking at the outside, we cannot tell about another's faith life. But we must look inside ourselves. Not at our neighbor's faith life, because we cannot tell the difference between the wheat and the weeds, but inside ourselves.

Have you repented so that when the judgment comes, the harvester will see you as a wheat and not a weed? If we are serious about our repentance, we need the kind of sorry that you want to never do it again. And the only way that kind of repentance works is if we let Christ's forgiving power come into our lives.

Perhaps the best and simplest definition of "repentance" I have ever read comes from Richard Jensen in *Touched by the Spirit*. He also relates baptism and repentance. It goes like this: "The daily baptismal experience has many names. It may be called repentance. Unfortunately, repentance is often understood as an 'I can' experience. 'I am sorry for my sins. I can do better. I can please you, God.' So often we interpret repentance as our way of turning to God. That cannot be.

Christianity is not about an individual turning to God. Christianity is about God turning to us.”

“In repenting, therefore, we ask the God who has turned towards us, buried us in baptism and raised us to new life, to continue his work of putting us to death. Repentance is an ‘I cannot’ experience. To repent is to volunteer for death. Repentance asks that the ‘death of self’ which God began to work in us in baptism continue to this day. The repentant person comes before God saying, ‘I cannot do it myself, God. Kill me and give me new life. You buried me in baptism. Bury me again today. Raise me to a new life.’ That is the language of repentance. Repentance is a daily experience that renews our baptism.” (p. 49)

So, as we become people who come to Christ daily asking for forgiveness and are drown in the waters of baptism and raised to a new life. This process happens over and over again. As we are raised to a new life in Christ, then we are asked to bring forth fruit. Fruit can be many things in our life. We can reach out to the lonely, the grieving, the hungry, the imprisoned, the sick and we could go on and on with a list of possibilities.

As you look at yourself this day, remember there is time for repentance, there is time to change. Remember God has given the opportunity for all people to be saved. He has given us many opportunities to repent, to bear fruit. The sower has done all the sowing, he has planted the seeds, he will nourish the seeds, he will water them, care for them lovingly and all he asks us to do is let him. Will you let God’s spirit work in your life so that you can bear fruit? Amen

Benediction:

Beloved, the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. May the Spirit bless us and empower us to reveal ourselves as the children of God as we work for the flourishing of all creation. Amen.