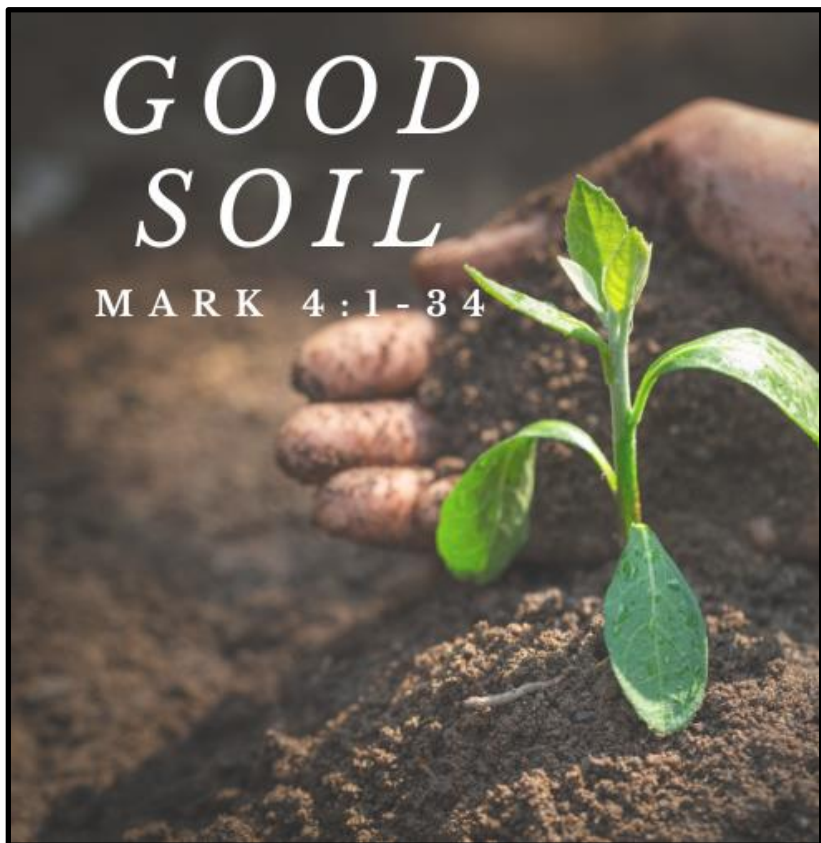


GOOD SOIL

MARK 4 : 1 - 34



Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 21, 2024 + 9am

Zion-Public WiFi password: Zion54484
Congregational responses are in BOLD.

All are welcome to receive Jesus' unconditional gift of God's grace through the sacrament of Holy Communion. Regardless of your church membership or affiliation, all are encouraged to participate in communion or to come forward for a blessing.

The communion bread is homemade by congregation members and contains gluten and honey. For those with allergies or sensitivities, an alternative will be provided upon request.

Children of all ages are encouraged to worship with the whole community in Christ. Children's worship bags are available in the back of the sanctuary.

Page numbers that are listed are found in the front of the cranberry-colored hymnal at the bottom of the page. Hymn numbers are listed in bold, large print on the top of the page.

If you would like home communion, a hospital visit, or a conversation with the pastor, please contact the church office at 715.687.4110 or office@zionstratford.org or Pastor Amy Heinz at 608.498.5772 or pastoramy@zionstratford.org.

Ministers: All the People of God through the love of Jesus and the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit

Pastor: Rev. Amy Heinz

Administrative Assistant: Kathy Busche

Organists: Judy Polege, Marge Redetzke, Ryan Huther

Custodian: Rod Huther

Missionaries: Steven & Bethany Friberg, Tanzania

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PRELUDE
CENTERING AND BELLS' CALL TO WORSHIP
WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

We Gather in Grace

OPENING LITANY

We begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

In your wisdom, O God, you call us here to worship you.

We gather, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be fully alive with your life abundant,
ready to listen and respond with heart, soul, strength, and mind.

We gather, alive to the Word of God.

You call us to be always watchful for your Word of wisdom,
sometimes startling and unexpected,
Sometimes still and quiet,
but always dwelling among us.

We watch and wait for the Word of God in this place.

Amen**

HYMN

"As Rain From the Clouds"

ELW 508

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Let us make a hopeful confession to God.

Brief silence for individual reflection and confession.

We seek you, God, in the spaces of our lives.

**The spaces between what we've done
and what we've left undone.**

**The spaces between our convictions
and our actions,**

**the spaces between all that we hoped to do,
and what we've actually done.**

**We come with humility,
knowing that we can't always see
the ways we've disappointed you,
nor can we always see
the long-term effects of the good we've done.
This is a prayer for the road ahead,
which is an empty space stretching before us.
Fill us with a burning compassion
for those around us,
a love that will not let us go.
Give us courage to give boldly,
love simply,
hope deeply,
risk greatly.
Our light is small,
our time is short,
but let it shine for you,
always, ever, all for you.**

Amen.

God hears our fervent prayer.

In the name of + Jesus Christ,
our sins are pardoned.

The penalty is paid.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

GREETING

May the love of God the Father, the grace of Jesus the Son,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of the Word,

**in the parable of the sower, you showed us how your word can
take root and grow within us. Nurture the seeds of your word in
our hearts and help us grow in faith and love. In Jesus' name we
pray. Amen.**

We Hear the Word of God

COMPLEMENTARY READING

Psalm 126

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

READING

Mark 4:1-34

Again [Jesus] began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ “Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell on a path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and

increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”⁹ And he said, “If you have ears to hear, then hear!”

¹⁰ When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything comes in parables, ¹² in order that

‘they may indeed look but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand;
so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.’ ”

¹³ And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But they have no root and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the age and the lure of wealth and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²⁰ And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.”

²¹ He said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket or under the bed and not on the lampstand? ²² For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. ²³ If you have ears to hear, then hear!” ²⁴ And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and it will be added to you. ²⁵ For to those who have, more will be given, and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.”

²⁶ He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come.”

³⁰ He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Huh?!

Rev. Amy Heinz

HYMN

“Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil”

ELW 512

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

On the third day he rose again;

he ascended into heaven,

he is seated at the right hand of the Father,

and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

United with your saints across time and place, we pray for our shared world.

A brief silence.

O Triune God, grant us your gracious, guiding presence as we enter the new year. As we join Christians of every time who have awaited Jesus' return, lead us into this new time, confident that your promises will be fulfilled. Hear us, O God:

Your mercy is great.

Spirit of Truth, call us to repentance in this new year. Forgive us for past unfaithfulness, silence in the face of injustice, and inaction amid suffering. Move us from the desire to hoard our wealth toward faithful stewardship. Help us to share your gifts with those who cry out for daily bread. Hear us, O God:

Your mercy is great.

Prince of Peace, healer, and reconciler, heal the divisions in your Church and among the peoples of the world. As you prayed that we should all be one, give us new visions to enable that unity. Be with us on our ecumenical journey, and with those sisters and brothers who surround us in the great cloud of witnesses.

Hear us, O God:

Your mercy is great.

God of all ages, release us from fear. Lead us forward, even as you have led your Church forward from an empty cross and tomb through millenia. Be our companion as we walk unexplored paths into an unknown future. Open us to new possibilities. Renew our hope. Grant us faith to move ahead. Be our companion until Jesus comes again. In his name we pray.

Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

We Share the Meal

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *"Accept, O Lord, the Gifts We Bring* **ELW 691 v1**

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Faithful God,

We look back on the year behind us and appreciate your presence with us through it. In this new year, grant that we may become more faithful, more committed to your kingdom work, more knowledgeable of your ways, more familiar with your spirit, more yielding to your instruction, and more willing to give of ourselves for others.

Accept our tithes and offerings this day as an act of faith and of worship.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

You are holy, O God of majesty,

and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, in whom you have revealed yourself, our light and our salvation.

Baptized in Jordan's waters, Jesus took his place with sinners, and your voice proclaimed him your beloved. Your Spirit anointed him to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to restore sight to the blind, to free the oppressed.

He lived among us in power and grace, touching broken lives with your healing peace. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

Therefore with the whole company of saints in heaven and on earth we worship and glorify you, God most holy, and we sing with joy:**

SANCTUS

"Holy, Holy, Holy"

ELW p. 153

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

DISTRIBUTION SONGS

"Lamb of God"

ELW p. 154

"As We Gather at Your Table"

ELW 522

"Break Now the Bread of Life"

ELW 515

BLESSING AND PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We Serve the World in God's Name

BENEDICTION

May the grace of Christ, which daily renews us, and the love of God, which enables us to love all, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which unites us in one body, make us eager to obey the will of God until we meet again, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

CLOSING SONG

"On What Has Now Been Sown"

ELW 550

DISMISSAL

We go in peace to love and serve our neighbors,
with open doors, open hearts, and open hands.
Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Notes, Prayers, and Thoughts

Zion Lutheran Church

Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Hands

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