

**Sunday, July 12, 2020**  
**Pentecost 6**  
**Grace Lutheran Church**  
**Somers Point, NJ 08244**  
**Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf**

**“Let Your Heart be Good Soil”**



"Lord let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word.  
Lord let my heart be good soil, where love can grow me peace is understood.  
When my heart is hard, break the stone away.  
When my heart is cold, warm it with the day.  
When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.  
Lord let my heart, Lord let my heart, Lord let my heart be good soil!" ELW #512

I read this comment on today's Gospel from Matthew, "Undoubtedly, each of us has had experiences where we have heard God's Word proclaimed, either in the scriptures, or in preaching, or testimony of another disciple. Recently for me in scripture is Psalm:32, God you are my hiding place, you protect me in trouble, and surround with songs of victory! It's one of St. Augustine's favorites. As for preaching, someone told me the whole sermon, they heard preached one Sunday "You heard it, you know it, Go do it!" As for the testimony of another disciple, I have four disciples' testimonies I want to share. First, I had a phone conversation about this Covid-19 Pandemic with a friend who mentioned Isaiah whose wisdom matches Proverbs esp. 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says The Lord." Trust the Lord in a time like this. Secondly, the story of God's water in The Pine Barrens by John McPhee. "Fred Brown's house is on an unpaved road that curves along the edge of a wide cranberry Bog, what attracted me to it was the pump that stands in his yard. A wonder to notice the pump. With eight automobiles in all sorts of conditions, old refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, parts of radios, a short wooden ski, a large wooden mallet, dozens of cranberry boxes, fire wood , engine heads and maybe a thousand other things...Eventually, I made the request I had intended to make when I walked in the door, 'Could I have some water?' I have a jerry can and I'd like to fill it at the pump. 'Hell, yes!' he said. That isn't my water. That's God's water. That's God's water. That right Bill? I guess so, Bill said without looking up. It's good water, I can tell you that. That's God's water, Fred said again, take all you want!" This story made a deep impact acknowledging water is God's in first encounter with a thirsty visitor.

And there are times when God's Word has failed to flourish in our lives. In the midst of fear or when we are sick and tired waiting for God's Word to bring relief and comfort. In my One Year Book of Psalms, I read one "great British preacher," Charles Haddon Spurgeon starting out at his London church, a terrible epidemic hit the city. In just about every family in his church, somebody came down with the Asiatic cholera. He did his best to minister, but there was only so much he could do. He became very weary. While walking home, he saw a sign in the window of a shoemaker's shop. It said, "because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Ps. 91:9-10, KJV. "The effect upon my heart was immediate," Spurgeon wrote. "I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil and suffered no harm." He praised God. Remember the promise of Psalm 91 in frightful circumstances. This doesn't mean we will be immune to all disease or danger, but we know that the Lord will keep us safe from eternal harm.

I will not forget my encounter with Julie Henning and her testimony. She is an Amerasian who was born in South Korea during the Korean War. At age 13, she was brought to America by Pearl S. Buck and "adopted" as her daughter. Julie spent the first thirteen years of her life living in poverty near Seoul, Korea. She, with only her mother to support her, was subject to the scorn of those who would not accept her as a member of a mixed race. This first generation Amerasian was protected by Almighty God years before she ever knew who God was. Today she and her husband, Doug, are both educators in the Souderton Area School District, where they also facilitate a weekly Bible study. The cause of Amerasians is dear to Julie's heart. Addressing their issues through newspapers, radio, television and U.S. Congressional hearings, including speaking to an audience at Carnegie Hall. In January 2001, she and her husband were honored to present the Pearl S. Buck Woman of the Year Award to Madame Lee He Ho, Korean President's wife. In October 2006, Julie also took part in presenting the same award to First Lady Laura Bush.

Like Fred, Spurgeon, and Julie, hopefully we also have had times where God's Word has fallen on good soil, when the Word has touched us deeply, and caused us to grow more into the people Jesus calls us to be in the life of discipleship. Let us work to develop fertile hearts for the Word to take root.

When praying seems empty do it anyway. As long as it takes.

Herbert Brokering wrote an interesting insight still planted in my heart, take a seed and plant it in wet cement and then wait for it to germinate and grow. Reminds me of Jesus buried in a sealed rock tomb.

Lord, let our hearts be good soil open to the seed of your Word. Bloom and bear fruit where you are planted!