**Our Redeemer Lutheran Church Prospect Heights, IL**

**8th Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, July 26, 2020**

**AS WE GATHER**

Treasures are hard to find and even harder to hold on to. Jesus describes the kingdom of God as a great treasure hidden in a field, a pearl of great price, and a net full of fish. But this treasure is one of God’s own making. He esteems us His treasured possession and delivers up His own Son that we might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom without end. On earth that treasure is hidden in the dirt, found side by side among cheap trinkets, and in nets that hold good and bad fish. But one day, it will all be clear. They will be set apart and the false treasures exposed. For now, it is enough to believe His Word and trust in His promise and hold steadfast to His Son.

**HYMN** “Today Your Mercy Calls Us” LSB 915

1 Today Your mercy calls us
 To wash away our sin.
However great our trespass,
 Whatever we have been,
However long from mercy
 Our hearts have turned away,
Your precious blood can wash us
 And make us clean today.

2 Today Your gate is open,
 And all who enter in
Shall find a Father’s welcome
 And pardon for their sin.
The past shall be forgotten,
 A present joy be giv’n,
A future grace be promised,
 A glorious crown in heav’n.

3 Today our Father calls us;
 His Holy Spirit waits;
His blessèd angels gather
 Around the heav’nly gates.
No question will be asked us
 How often we have come;
Although we oft have wandered,
 It is our Father’s home.

4 O all-embracing Mercy,
 O ever-open Door,
What should we do without You
 When heart and eye run o’er?
When all things seem against us,
 To drive us to despair,
We know one gate is open,
 One ear will hear our prayer.

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**INVOCATION**

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

Pastor: Do good, O Lord, to those who hold fast to Your name

**People: and to those upright in heart.**

Pastor: But those who turn aside to their crooked ways,

**People: the Lord will lead away with evildoers.**

*Silence for self-examination*

Pastor: Let us confess our sins to God, our Father.

**People: O Lord, have mercy upon us poor, miserable sinners. We have offended You in thought, word, and deed. We have sinned against our neighbor. Spare us, O God, who confess our sins to You and who hide not our faults from Your eyes. Restore the penitent and forgive us all our sins according to the promise of Your mercy revealed to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord. As He suffered and died to cover our sins, cover us with His righteousness, and grant us grace that today and every day we live upright, sober, and godly lives to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. Through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, our Savior, you have been made children of God in Baptism and live because of His mercy. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

Pastor: May He who began this good work within you bring it to completion on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

**KYRIE**

Pastor: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

**People: Amen.**

**SALUTATION AND PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Pastor: Let us pray, Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love, that, receiving what You have promised, we may love what You have commanded; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

**OLD TESTAMENT READING** *Deuteronomy 7:6–9*

6“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**EPISTLE** *Romans 8:28–39*

28 We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

29For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

31What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;

we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**HOLY GOSPEL** *Matthew 13:44–52* (The kingdom of God is like a hidden treasure.)

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the thirteenth chapter.

**People: Glory to You, O Lord.**

44[Jesus said:] “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

47“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. 48When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. 49So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51“Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” 52And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY** “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” LSB 656

1 A mighty fortress is our God,
 A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev’ry need
 That hath us now o’ertaken.
The old evil foe
Now means deadly woe;
 Deep guile and great might
 Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.

2 With might of ours can naught be done,
 Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the valiant One,
 Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this?
Jesus Christ it is,
 Of Sabaoth Lord,
 And there’s none other God;
He holds the field forever.

3 Though devils all the world should fill,
 All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
 They shall not overpow’r us.
This world’s prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
 He can harm us none.
 He’s judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

4 The Word they still shall let remain
 Nor any thanks have for it;
He’s by our side upon the plain
 With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife,
 Though these all be gone,
 Our vict’ry has been won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.

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**SERMON**

**“Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.” Those are the things that a traditional jingle says a bride should be wearing on her wedding day. They also happen to be things that Jesus says his followers should be able to teach and to learn. Well, he really mentioned only the first two of them — we don’t have to worry about borrowed and blue. But “every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”**

            Those words bring us toward the end of Matthew 13, from which we’ve read for three weeks. In this chapter, seven of Jesus’ parables have been collected, along with explanations of some and comments by the evangelist. All of the parables have to do in one way or another with the kingdom of heaven — what the other three gospels call the kingdom of God. Two of the parables that we read today — the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great value — emphasize the overwhelming value of the kingdom. A person who comes upon it and realizes its value will be willing to give up everything else that he or she has in order to get it.

            But then the final parable warns us that the kingdom of heaven might not be recognized because it doesn’t fit our image of what such a kingdom should be. The church, isn’t simply a collection of pious and virtuous people but includes hypocrites and people who may be in it for the wrong reason. The net of Christian mission catches both good and bad, but Jesus assures us that in the end it will all be sorted out. The words about the bad part of the catch being thrown into the fire may seem harsh, but the point is that, at the end, there will be no more debate or question about what is good and what is evil, and evil will be done away with.

            Then after all these parables, Jesus asks his disciples, “Have you understood all this?” They answer, “Yes”. Jesus takes them at their word and concludes with those words we started with: **“Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”**

            There are several things to unpack there. What new things and what old things is Jesus talking about? But before getting to that, we’d better see what a “scribe” is — or was.

            We hear the phrase “the scribes and the Pharisees” several times in the gospels. The word “scribe” sounds as if it might refer to professional secretaries or something of the sort, so we might think that the ones in the Bible are secretaries of the Pharisees. But while the word “scribes” is a fairly traditional term. Some other Bible translations use “teachers of the law,” but we could also say “Bible scholars” or “theologians.” The scribes were men who by careful study had become knowledgeable about the Hebrew scriptures and were regarded as experts in that area. So, for example, when the magi come to Jerusalem looking for the one born king of the Jews, “the chief priests and scribes of the people” are consulted to find out where the Messiah should be born.1

            In the gospels, the scribes are sometimes pictured as opponents of Jesus. They would be the natural people to check up on whether or not Jesus was observing all the details of the law of Moses. But not all scribes were hostile to the Lord, and later Jesus will say that he himself will *send* scribes to warn wrongdoers.2 In other words, there are to be Christian Bible scholars and theologians. And — to return to the closing words of our text — Jesus tells us here about what their qualifications will be. They will be able to bring forth both new and old.

            And before going any further, you want to realize that this isn’t just about men and women who preach and teach in the church. If being able to teach certain things in the kingdom of heaven is important, it must also be important for citizens of that kingdom to *learn* those things. This is about all Christians, not just a select few. Adult Christians are to have an adult understanding of the faith, of what is new and what is old.

            Jesus himself was something new for the people of his time. There were other Jews going around preaching and teaching, and Jesus himself was certainly in the tradition of Israel’s prophets. But the general belief was that prophecy had stopped centuries before. And Jesus never said, as the old prophets had done, that the word of the Lord “came to” him. He behaved and spoke as if he *was* the word of the Lord, God’s message to the world. We’re told in one place that the people who heard him “were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.”3 He was not just an interpreter of the law, but the voice of the lawgiver.

            Jesus would continue to be something new. Those who were looking for the Messiah didn’t expect that the one they hoped for would die on a Roman cross. Then something utterly new happened when he was raised from the dead, and word about him and faith in him began to spread to all the nations of the world.

            And what Jesus brings continues to be new for us. The kingdom of heaven that he proclaimed was not just a restoration of King David’s monarchy, and it is not — though Christians have sometimes thought this — the church. The church is, at its best, a kind of down payment on the kingdom of heaven. God’s purpose is something far greater, the renewal of creation, “new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.”4

            But surprisingly, this is also old. Earlier in this chapter, Matthew told his readers that what Jesus was doing in his teaching was a fulfillment of a prophecy about proclaiming “what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.”5

            What God was doing, and is doing, and will do, through Jesus Christ was not just some hastily put together “Plan B” to solve a problem that had arisen. When we look back to the beginning of the Bible in the light of Christ, we can see things like God’s sabbath rest on the seventh day of creation and the promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed in his descendants as signs that God’s purpose in creation has always been the kingdom of heaven, the loving and righteous reign of God that will encompass all people, all creatures. “Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD,”6the psalmist tells us.

**We shouldn’t forget though that Christians continue to be faced with new challenges. That shouldn’t be a surprise because God created time and intended for the world to have a history. The church didn’t figure everything out back in the first century. It wasn’t until a couple of hundred years ago that Christians finally came to realize that slavery simply wasn’t consistent with the message of the kingdom of heaven. The role of women in the church and in society has undergone major changes in the last few decades. Science has given us new understandings of the world that require us to rethink some time-honored ways in which Christians have understood the creation. And the list of new things could go on.**

**In order to deal with those new issues, we have to be well grounded in what is old, in scripture and the church’s history of interpreting it. The good old Bible will not simply tell us how to answer all our questions — that isn’t its purpose. It is instead the witness to the central act of all history, the coming of God to share in the life of the world in order to bring about the kingdom of heaven in its fullness. “See,” the Book of Revelation reports God saying at the end of history, “I am making all things new, in Jesus name, Amen.”7**

**Brothers and Sisters, the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ, and His Word, Amen.**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:**  *Nicene Creed*

**People: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.**

 **And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten**

**of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.**

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

O Lord, we are Your people, chosen by Your grace to be Your own possession and granted mercy upon mercy. Hear Your people who cry to You in need, and remember us according to the favor You have shown to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

That the Lord may open our hearts to prayer and guide us in this holy conversation so that we may know those things for which we ought to pray and seek them according to His grace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That the Church may prosper, the good news of Jesus Christ go forth unhindered, and the Spirit bring many into the fellowship of the redeemed, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That we may remember our Baptism into Christ and live boldly in our vocation as His children no matter the difficulties of this fallen world, within our families, in our neighborhoods and throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That the Lord may bless our nation and those who govern us, and that we may use the gift of freedom to live holy, upright and godly lives, to the praise of His glory, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That the Lord may bless all lawful occupations and professions, and that we may pursue honesty and virtue in all things, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That God’s people may recognize the true treasure of the cross and rejoice in the resurrection, pursuing with all their hearts, minds, bodies and souls the things of His kingdom, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That the sick may be healed, the troubled granted peace, the grieving comforted and the dying kept in peace, *[and especially do we pray for* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,]* let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That the Lord may grant us generous hearts so that we may honor Him with the worship of our hearts and bring to Him the tithes and offerings that support His work, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That we may be steadfast and immovable, abiding in Christ and in His Word of truth, and that we would be kept from error and delivered from temptation, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That the Lord may watch over our comings and goings and deliver us safely into the arms of His mercy, in the blessed rest of the faithful, to receive with all the dead in Christ the gift of life everlasting, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Holy God, mighty Lord, endless is Your mercy and eternal Your reign. Hear the prayers of Your people who cry to You in their need and who plead to You in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER** *Matthew 6:9–13*

**People:** **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.**

**BENEDICAMUS**

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**BENEDICTION**

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**People: Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Pastor: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

**People: Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN** “The Church’s One Foundation” *LSB* 644

1 The Church’s one foundation
 Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation
 By water and the Word.
From heav’n He came and sought her
 To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
 And for her life He died.

2 Elect from ev’ry nation,
 Yet one o’er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation:
 One Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses,
 Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses
 With ev’ry grace endued.

3 Though with a scornful wonder
 The world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
 By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping;
 Their cry goes up, “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping
 Shall be the morn of song.

4 Through toil and tribulation
 And tumult of her war
She waits the consummation
 Of peace forevermore
Till with the vision glorious
 Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
 Shall be the Church at rest.

5 Yet she on earth has union
 With God, the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
 With those whose rest is won.
O blessèd heav’nly chorus!
 Lord, save us by Your grace
That we, like saints before us,
 May see You face to face.