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## Gospel lesson

At this point in Jesus's ministry, His identity as an agent of God has been made evident through his words and actions – which some have accepted and some have denied. He appears to be somewhere north of Jerusalem, possibly in or near his hometown of Nazareth, and begins a series of parables.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/parable-sower-seed/>;  
courtesy of Lumo Project Films – [www.lumoproject.com](http://www.lumoproject.com)

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

**NRSV**

<sup>1</sup>That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

<sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.

<sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow.

<sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.

<sup>5</sup>Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil.

<sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away.

<sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

<sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

<sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears listen!"

<sup>18</sup> "Hear then the parable of the sower.

<sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.

<sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

<sup>21</sup> yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.

<sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing.

<sup>23</sup> But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

*The Word of God for the people of God*

## &lt;Children's/Interactive time&gt;

Do you like school? Why? <Let them respond>

When the teacher hands out assignments, what do you do with them? Do you work hard on them as soon as you can or put them aside for later? <Let them respond>

Does everyone put the same effort and focus into doing their work? What do other students do?

<Let them respond>

- ✝ Some may try to ignore the assignment,
- ✝ some start it but give up when they cannot figure out something in it,
- ✝ some start it but get distracted by other things and leave it undone, and
- ✝ some work diligently on it to get it done.

Given the different ways students focus on their work, who learns the most? <Let them respond>

Does focusing on getting a good grade help?

<Let them respond>

After doing an assignment, which ones are most likely to use the information in daily life, those who focused on doing it or those who did not get it done?

<Let them respond>

After doing an assignment, which ones are most likely to be good at teaching others how to do it?

<Let them respond>

Who do you think knows God best, those who try to learn about and pray to God, or those who ignore or deny God? <Let them respond>

Which of those do you think will be better at sharing God's love? <Let them respond>

Who do you think is more likely to inspire others to seek out God, those who love Jesus, those who try to do what is right without looking to God, or those who just look out for themselves? <Let them respond>

May we always set our minds on seeking the holiness of God and sharing the love of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, that all may come to know the goodness of God's kingdom.

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<Hymn "Hymn of Promise">

UMH #707>

## Message: Set Your Mind



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/core-faith/week-2-seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-2-seventh-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-core-faith-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Holy Center of all life,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,

- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That in setting our minds on You, we may live Your love more fully every day and inspire others to seek you too. Amen.

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We continue our look at “Core Faith” today with “Delight in the Law.”

“Romans 8 invites us to wake up each day with our minds set on Christ, discovering life and peace not through self-centered striving but by letting the Spirit shape how we see, live, and love in the world.”

I want you to think for a moment about how you started your day today. Was it more a grateful, “Oh, God, it’s morning!” or a dreading “Oh God! It’s morning!”-?

I have had both kinds of mornings.

- ✝ When I get going in a good mood, things seem to fall into place more easily – I take unexpected events in stride more readily, adapting to take advantage of the new circumstances they put me in.
- ✝ When I start in a bad mood, unexpected events become road blocks to getting anything done – I get stuck on not having what I expected, which snowballs into making the situation worse.

It is kind of funny how our entire day can be shaped

by our mindset – and the text today points out that it extends to our entire lives. Esau came out of the womb hairy, implying a more bestial attitude toward life; this is reinforced by his selling his birthright for the immediate gratification of some stew, with the implication that faithful humans should think things through better.

Jacob, on the other hand, was grasping for what was not rightfully his: his brother's heel at birth, then Esau's birthright for stew – when the culture of hospitality would have people feed even strangers who showed up on their doorstep. The Hebrew verb used for Jacob's boiling of the stew has connotations of seething, being proud, and acting presumptuously.<sup>1</sup>

From their conception, the twin brothers struggling with each other made things uncomfortable for their family. When we have an adversarial mindset, we make life harder for ourselves and for those around us.

We heard the psalmist today talking about how he was severely afflicted, the wicked laying snares for him and such. He knew his only escape from that was to turn to the Lord: he swore an oath, praised God, and asked God to teach him the holy law (God's ordinances). With God's word as a light for our path, we can learn to live better, to work for positive outcomes rather than stew in victimhood.

We may think we are justified in judging our enemies, but Paul tells us there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus – and we cannot truly know

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h2102/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

the status of someone else's heart before God. We only know that we have been forgiven of our sins because of Jesus – that God wants us in relationship with our Creator so much, not even death on a cross can stop God's forgiveness if we seek it.

In the Gospel parable, none of the seeds were bad. The environments they wound up in were unsuitable for them to grow in. The more we focus on the things of this mundane world – money and stuff, control of others' lives, appearing perfect, and so on – the worse our environment becomes due to sin.

People reject God for a variety of reasons such as misunderstanding the Word, having to deal with trouble, getting distracted by shiny fads. We then try to play God and make things worse. We lose the ability to develop strong, healthy relationships with one another. We think of each other as adversaries instead of as beloved children of God.

Paul pointed out that the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. When we think of adversaries, we want people stopped and punished – but God always forgives and blesses the repentant when they humbly ask for it. In doing so, God scatters blessings across the earth.

The Holy Spirit is at work, sending blessings everywhere, not just where it is “deserved.” Jesus taught us to work together, to fix relationships and to help one another. God love us not matter what, calls us to relationship, and blesses us when we respond in faith. This enables the church to grow and

continue throughout all generations.

So this week, I invite you to:

- ✝ Think of a broken relationship you have, that you find painful to your heart.
- ✝ Pray to God for guidance on how to mend it.
- ✝ Make the first step(s) to enable reconciliation (because you are the one feeling the pain):
  - **listen** to the other person,
  - understand boundaries (both yours and theirs) and
  - form a healthy, nurturing bond of love.

Set your mind upon the Spirit of God, that through Christ you may be restored to a life of wholeness and love, and enable others to know that grace in their lives as well.