



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Highspire
Pentecost 7
July 12, 2026

Introduction

God's word is like the rain that waters the earth and brings forth vegetation. It is also like the sower who scatters seed indiscriminately. Our lives are like seeds sown in the earth. Even from what appears to be little, dormant, or dead, God promises a harvest. At the Lord's table we are fed with the bread of life, that we may bear fruit in the world.

Overview

Life in Every Direction

We can identify death in every direction. We see war, hunger, addiction, poverty, a dying planet, and broken hearts. This is not a new story. The children of Israel surely saw death in every direction, wandering in the desert and at least occasionally wondering about their next meal. Paul looks at his own life and, at first, sees nothing beyond spiritual death. He reminds us that death is not just physical, but also spiritual. Then, in the parable of the sower, three-fourths of the seeds die and three-fourths of the sections of the field are inhospitable to flourishing life. Sometimes, life isn't even given a chance. We might look at the world and ourselves and only see the places that are inhospitable to God's love.

Today's texts all go a step further, however, to articulate or reveal God bringing forth life where there is only death in every direction. Cypress and myrtle trees rise up in the place of thorns and briars (Isa. 55:13). "Christ Jesus has set [us] free from the law of sin and of death," and the life-giving Spirit dwells in us (Rom. 8:2, 10). The parable of the sower elicits reflection, repentance, and, ultimately, new life from its readers and hearers in considering the sort of spiritual life they practice. Are we hospitable or inhospitable to God's word? This parable is a vivid reminder of all God has overcome—rocks, scorching sun, thorns, and snatching—to bring life to the world. God brings forth life in places where people see only death.

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE

Grady Daub

The Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

ELW p. 94

P In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.
Most merciful God,

C we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

*GATHERING HYMN "Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty" ELW #533

*GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

The Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

God's word to Israel's exiles is as sure and effective as never-failing precipitation. Their return to the Holy Land in a new exodus is cheered on by singing mountains and by trees that clap their hands.

10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
12 For you shall go out in joy
and be led back in peace;

the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle,
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

L The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: Psalm 65:[1-8] 9-13 (read responsively)

Your paths overflow with plenty. (Ps. 65:11)

1 You are to be praised, O God, in Zion;
to you shall vows be fulfilled.

**2 To you, the one who answers prayer,
to you all flesh shall come.**

3 Our sins are stronger than we are,
but you blot out our transgressions.

**4 Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to
dwell there! They will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by
the holiness of your temple.**

5 Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our
salvation, O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the oceans far
away.

**6 You make firm the mountains by your power;
you are girded about with might.**

7 You still the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves, and the clamor of the peoples.

8 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous signs; you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.]

9 You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of water. You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth.

10 You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.

11 You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.

12 May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy.

13 May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; let them shout for joy and sing.

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

There is no condemnation for those who live in Christ. God sent Christ to accomplish what the law was unable to do: condemn sin and free us from its death-dealing ways. The Spirit now empowers proper actions and values in our lives and gives us the promise of resurrected life.

1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's

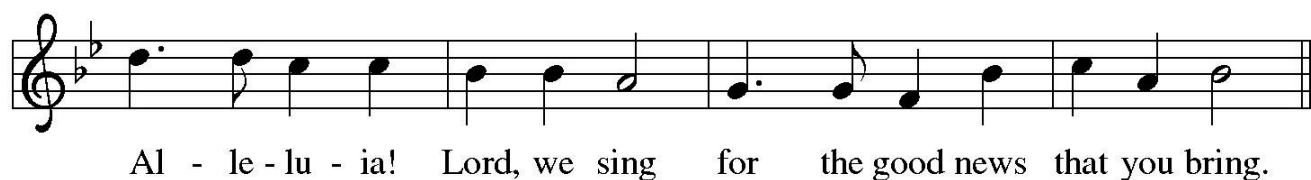
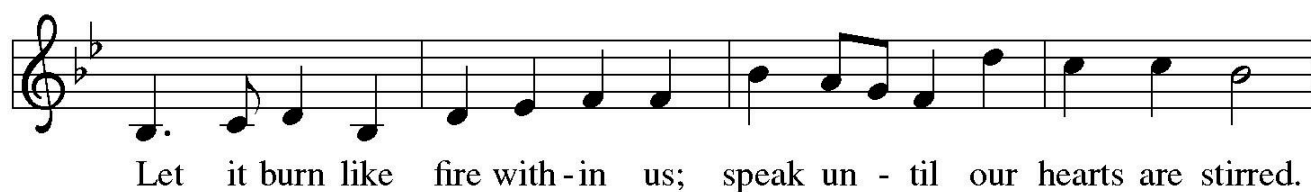
law—indeed, it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

L The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION "Alleluia! Lord and Savior" ELW p. 205



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

In Matthew's gospel, both Jesus and his disciples "sow the seed" of God's word by proclaiming the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near." Now, in a memorable parable, Jesus explains why this good news produces different results in those who hear.

P The holy gospel according to Matthew

C Glory to you, O Lord.

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.
2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow.
4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 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. 6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 If you have ears, hear!"

18 "Hear, then, the parable of the sower. 19 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. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 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. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. 23 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."

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Pastor Alex

SERMON

Pastor Alex

*HYMN OF THE DAY "We Plow the Fields and Scatter"

ELW #681

*APOSTLES CREED

ELW p.105

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 INTERCESSION

A Trusting in God's steadfast love for all God has made, let us pray
for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God our gardener, you scatter grace like seed across the world. Continue to cultivate the garden of your church with your abundant Spirit. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our joy, your bountiful creation reflects your commitment to life despite our actions disregarding its wonder. We look toward Isaiah's vision, when all creation rejoices, and the trees will clap for joy at your salvation. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our life, you give us the same Spirit by which you raised Christ from the dead. Set our minds on that Spirit whenever fear or condemnation overwhelm throughout the world (global concerns may be named). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our host and table, we pray for children who hunger and rely on school meals, for all who toil under the hot sun without refreshment, for the chronically ill who have exhausted their resources, and for local concerns especially *Don Alsedek, Connie Barner, Rachel Benkovic, Rose Hoover, Samson Kennedy, Bernie Kunz, and Rob Lipsitt.* God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our source, tend this assembly with your grace throughout this summer season. May those who travel for work or recreation do so safely, and may visitors find refreshment among us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give you thanks that the roots of your goodness run deep throughout history. We remember those saints who have gone before us in faith (especially Bishop Nathan Söderblom, whom the church commemorates today). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

P Grateful for your abundant provision and trusting in your goodness, we cast all our cares upon you, through the abundant grace of Christ Jesus.

C Amen.

*PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

SPECIAL MUSIC "The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want" Noah Hawkins

The Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

*OFFERTORY HYMN

Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful

ELW #182

Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of

bles - sing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be

fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -

nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your

pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

The musical score is written on five staves in treble clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below each staff. The final staff ends with a double bar line.

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

A Loving God, we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts. Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love, so that all creation can taste your abundance. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever.

C Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ELW p.206

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

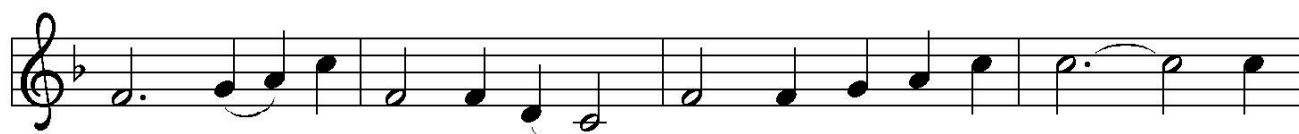
ELW p.207



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

*EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

*In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

*Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.*

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever.

Amen.

*THE LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p.208

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.**

***SHARING THE MEAL**

P Heaven has come near. Come, share in the feast.

COMMUNION HYMNS:

"Lamb of God"

ELW p.208

"Lord Let My Heart Be Good Soil"

ELW #512

"For the Fruit of All Creation"

ELW #679

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

A Compassionate God, through the gifts of bread and wine our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love. Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal, may share your love freely, as you have shared with us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.

C Amen.

The Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***BLESSING**

P Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, ☩ one God,
bless, heal, and hold you today and always.

C Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

"Sent Forth by God's Blessing"

ELW #547

***DISMISSAL**

A Heaven has come near. Go, share the good news !

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Grady Daub

We appreciate Grady Daub, and Noah Hawkins for sharing their musical talent with us this morning. Thank-you.

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Gathering Hymn - "Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty" ELW #533 words -

Benjamin Schmolck music - Joachim Neander PUBLIC DOMAIN

Gospel Acclamation - "Alleluia! Lord and Savior" p. 205, setting 10

Hymn of the Day - "We Plow the Fields and Scatter" ELW #681

words - Matthias Claudius music - Johann A. P. Schulz PUBLIC DOMAIN

Special Music - "The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want" arr. John

Carter @2007 Hope Publishing Co. BROTHER JAMES' AIR Noah Hawkins, trumpet

Offertory Hymn - "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful " ELW #182

"Holy, Holy, Holy" p.207, setting 10 ELW

Distribution of Communion - Lamb of God, p. 208 ELW

"Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil" ELW #512 words & music - Handt Hanson @1985 Prince of Peace Publishing/Changing Church Forum Inc.

"For the Fruit of All Creation" ELW #679 words - Fred Pratt Green music - Welsh traditional, arr. Ralph V. Williams AR HYD Y NOS

Sending hymn - "Sent Forth by God's Blessing" ELW #547 words - Omer

Westendorf music - Welsh folk tune @1964 World Library Publications, div.GIA Publications, Inc. , harmonization @1978 LBW, Augsburg Fortress

THE ASH GROVE

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If you are in need of Pastoral care, please reach out to our church office at 717-939-3492 or by email at stpetershighspire240@gmail.com .

You can also reach out to Pastor Alex, at 717-434-5037.

Special Music for July

7/12 - Pentecost 7- Noah Hawkins, trumpet

7/19 - Pentecost 8 - Liz Jefferies, soloist

7/26 - Pentecost 9 - Spike Spilker, soloist

Worship Participants for July 12, 2026

Presiding Minister	Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Worship Assistant	Patrick Hawkins
Musician	Grady Daub
Lector	Randy Hoover

Worship Participants for July 19, 2026

Presiding Minister	Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Worship Assistant	Brian Keyser
Musician	Grady Daub
Lector	Matt Hunt

Altar Flower Sponsor needed

The following date is available for sponsoring the altar vases or centerpiece.
If you may be interested, please call Helene Hoch at 717-343-8397.

Sunday, August 30th

CENTERPIECE: Presented to the Glory of God by Randy, Grace, Andy Hoover and April Kroninger in loving memory of Fern Hoover.

Favorite Hymns Request

This summer we will be incorporating your favorite hymns during worship. Please list your hymn requests on the section below and place this sheet in the offering plate or in the church office. Thank you!

All are Welcome Bible Study

The All are Welcome Bible Study meets on Tuesday nights at 6:30pm. We are currently reading Psalms. We send out a weekly email with the Zoom link, as well as a brief summary of what we covered the previous week. To get the link for attending the Zoom session, or just to get on the weekly email list, please contact Matt and Mary Hunt at allarewelcomebiblestudy@gmail.com .

A Friendly reminder from Sally:

Please remember to take 1 or more Samaritan Bags to hand out to those who may be in need of this outreach .They are located in a basket in the back of the sanctuary to grab and keep available in your travels.

Come to church and stay for Fellowship every Sunday in the Parlor. Enjoy coffee and snacks and friendly conversation! If you would be interested in "Hosting a Sunday" please check the sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board located in the hallway outside the Music Room/Church Office.