



*Solitude can be  
a homecoming  
to your own  
deepest belonging.*

*—John O'Donohue*

**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
12 JULY 2020**

**Invitation to Prayer** — Psalm 119 from *Psalms for Praying* by Nan Merrill

Yes, your Truth is a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path.  
I shall open my heart's ear to converse with You  
Forever, to the end.

**Gathering Prayer**

Verdant Spirit flowing  
in and around us,  
under, over, behind and before us:  
Water the dry and brittle places in our hearts, we pray.

Rest us in this season of cold and darkness,  
that in the stillness of this time  
and in our meeting with you,  
we might be renewed and refreshed.

Then, rising  
from our contemplation,  
may we be  
life-giving words  
and loving actions in the world.  
Amen

## Scripture Reading—Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

*In between the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1–9) and Jesus' commentary (18–23) is a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. "Why do you speak [to the crowds] in parables?" the disciples ask. It seems as though Jesus is being intentionally vague and tricky!*

*It's likely the explanation offered by the Gospel here—in short, that some have eyes to see and others do not—addresses the question raised by the Gospel's audience about the different responses to Jesus and his teachings. In other words, "the crowds" represent those who are curious, but who ultimately "can't hear" and therefore do not embrace the way of Jesus.*

*Perhaps more significantly, parables bring an openness and depth to spiritual truths. Their poetic nature means we can return to them again and again and they will speak to us afresh. Despite the commentary Jesus offers, there is nothing "to get" about parables, nothing to figure out. They are not allegories or riddles. Rather, in listening with the ear of our heart, we allow the Word within the parable to cultivate truth so we might bear faith, hope and love.*



### Prayer for Openness

Open my mind  
that I might read between familiar lines.  
Open my heart  
and illumine truth below the darkened surface.  
Open my body  
that I might bear the fruit of your Word. Amen

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.

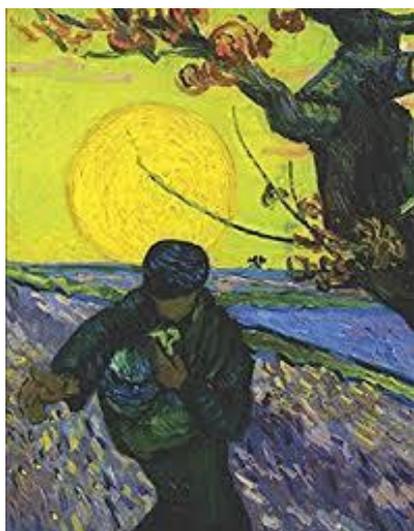
And he told them many things in parables, saying "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!

"Hear then the parable of the sower. 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. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 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. 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. 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."

## Going Deeper

Use the questions below to contemplate the seeds that have opened and taken root in your life during these weeks.

- What is opening—perhaps even with struggle and pain—for you? What is this experience like?
- Recall some of your positive experiences since the lockdown at the end of March. What fresh insights do they reveal about yourself and life in general?
- What timely messages have fallen on the good soil in your heart? You might jot them down or even sketch them to see what more is revealed.



Vincent Van Gogh painted thirty depictions of the sower including the one presented here, a portion of a larger painting. The sun is not present in each of Van Gogh's paintings and its placement above the sower's head is significant, hinting at a kind of hallow, perhaps.

Imagine yourself as the sower:

- What seeds have you cast that you feel are unproductive or less productive than you would like them to be right now? Do you sense an invitation—to sit at peace with this reality or take some action?
- Where do you see your efforts taking root and being fruitful?

## Silent Meditation

*You might spend some moments away from thoughts and images, holding gently what has been revealed and silently basking in God's embrace.*

How to meditate—from the World Community for Christian Meditation

Sit with your back straight and your feet on the floor. Close your eyes lightly. Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word — a prayer word or mantra. We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word "Maranatha." Say it as four equal syllables: Ma – ra – na – tha.

Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently, gently, faithfully and — above all — simply. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images, sensations and other words as they arise. Don't fight your distractions: let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively, returning to it with intention when your attention wanders.

## Prayers of Intercession

Source of Love in all times: we give thanks for this season of winter—shortened days and longer nights that invite us to move more slowly, to rest our bodies and minds, to await renewal by your Spirit. Nestled like seeds in the warm ground of your being, bring us in touch with our desires and longings, our hope for that which might break open in and through us with your love. Hear us as we pray: *Rest us in your love, open us to be.*

For peace and justice to grow in our land and between people, we pray: *Rest us in your love, open us to be.*

For a greater sharing of heart and resources, especially in the anxiety of these days and our uncertain future, we pray: *Rest us in your love, open us to be.*

For those who are struggling with illness or those who feel restless in mind and body, and for those who care for them, we pray: *Rest us in your love, open us to be.*

For your good creation that delights and provides us with life, help us to perceive our interconnectedness and live out of this awareness, we pray: *Rest us in your love, open us to be.*

For those situations and people on our minds... we pray: *Rest us in your love, open us to be.*

## Disciples' Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

## Blessing

Now and in the days to come,  
let us be one with God, the creator of all,  
one with Christ whose ministry is sowing love in the world,  
and one with the Spirit who moves across the soil, bringing nascent life to birth.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us all.