

2 July 2026
Dying Church, Rising Hope

Higher Things Thursday Matins
Saint Louis, MO

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“It’s a Miracle”

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

In the Name of (+) Jesus. Amen.

Jesus is not giving you spiritual gardening tips today. He’s not telling you to take a look at your heart and try to figure out how much is good soil or not, or to weed or unrock your heart, as if you could. No, this parable is your life. You know it. You live it.

Maybe this has happened to you . . . You stay up late one night, really late. Maybe for a really good reason! Because your little brother was sick and you were helping take care of him, or you had a project to finish up for school. Or maybe it was for a not so good reason. That happens too, right? And the next day is Sunday. So you get up and go to church, but you *just. can’t. focus*. You’re not following. You’re too tired. And the Word that is read and preached and sung *is snatched away*.

Or maybe this . . . Have you ever done something you knew was wrong, and you didn’t want to do it - you really didn’t! - but you did it anyway? The temptation was too great, and you were too weak. Maybe it didn’t really even seem that bad. Talking about that person behind their back, looking at that stuff online . . . And maybe you even wondered, *Did God really say . . . ?* And the Word of God, planted in you, *was choked*.

How ‘bout one more . . . A friend of yours, or maybe someone in your family gets sick or hurt - really bad. They’re suffering, hurting, dying. And so are you, for them! Or your grandma gets Alzheimers and doesn’t remember you anymore. Or internet trolls or real life bullies are making your life as a Christian bitter. And the questions come . . . *Why God? Why her? Why me? Do you even see, and care? Do you love me?* And the Word of God, planted in you, *is scorched* by the heat of sadness and tragedy and death.

If any of that has happened to you - and I’ll bet pretty much ALL of that has happened to ALL of you! - then you’ve lived this parable of Jesus today. There are a LOT of enemies of God’s Word, all bearing down on you, attacking you. From the devil and a sinful world outside you, to your own hard and rocky sinful nature inside you. And you think about all that, and how life just seems to be getting harder and

more complicated every day, and you realize: With all this, it's a miracle the Word of God grows at all!

Exactly. It's a miracle. It's not your doing. It's Jesus working in you. **And that's the hope Jesus wants you to have with this parable.** That despite the best efforts of the devil, the world, and the reality of your own sinful nature to snatch and scorch and choke the Word of God, they're not going to win. Because you are baptized. Your heart made into good soil *by Jesus*. To produce a harvest.

So they're not going to win. These enemies of God and His Word aren't going to win because they've already been defeated by Jesus. He took the attacks; *all* the attacks of the devil and the world, the worst they could dish out. On the cross, the promised Seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, the promised Seed of God that was sown into the womb of Mary, was Himself scorched and choked and attacked. And dead. Really dead. *Planted* six feet under dead.

And then that Seed grew! They could not stop Him or keep Him down or dead in the tomb. And that growth continued ever since, and is producing a harvest more abundant than can be counted. The Word of the Lord now planted *in you*.

For the Scriptures and Liturgy aren't just words *about* Jesus - they are Jesus speaking to you and sowing the Seed of His Word into your heart.

When you stumble and fall in sin, Jesus throws the Seed of His Word into your ears and says: *I forgive you all your sins!*

When you have doubts and fears and troubles, Jesus throws the Seed of His Word into your ears and says: *I baptized you! You are mine*, and I'm not letting you go!

When you're faced with death, so fearsome and so final, so filled with sorrow and dread, Jesus throws the Seed of His Word into your ears and says: *Been there! Done that! Came out alive!* And you will, too. In Me.

And when you are scorched and choked and weak, Jesus throws the Seed of His Word into your ears - *and your mouths!* His Body and Blood feeding, nourishing, strengthening you.

And that Word grows. Christ grows! In you. And not a little. Abundantly. Lavishly. He promised. And *He* produces a harvest - a hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold.

So though you are harried and harassed, assaulted and attacked, and maybe look like **a dying Christian**, and feel like one, too . . . you have implanted in you **a rising**

Seed that cannot die, and that will produce a harvest, and a resurrection. That is your hope - a sure and certain hope, in a sure and certain *and risen* Saviour.

That's your life. Christ is your life, your hope, your victory. Look to Him. Listen to Him. He won't let you down.

In the Name of (+) Jesus. Amen.