

Proper 10 (July 13, 2014)

“Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast” (*Lutheran Service Book* #577)

This week’s hymn of the day, “Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast”, is based on Jesus’ Parable of the Sower. It is a parable that gives us encouragement as we sow the seed of the Gospel.

Prior to the text of this parable, Jesus informs his followers that “*the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.*” (Matt. 9:37) This sets the precedent that there is a large, important task to be done and that you and I, along with the disciples, have been chosen as workers.

Jesus explains to his disciples through the parable that, as they faithfully heed His command to go out and spread the Gospel, they’re not always going to be successful. Not every seed they sow will take root and produce fruit. Not everyone who hears the Gospel is going to believe it. We are all sinful beings with pride, egos, worries, pleasures and reasoning that can get in the way of receiving the seed of God’s Word. Satan is continuously on the prowl doing all he can to work against God’s Word. The roots of faith can be trampled and choked out as worldly concerns and hardships come along.

At the same time, by God’s grace, others *do* receive the Word in good faith and produce richly. Jesus promises a wonderful harvest produced through some of the sown seed, “*some a hundredfold*”! (Matt. 13:8). This is the promise that keeps us going as sowers. God accomplishes His purpose through His Word as it works in the lives where the Spirit’s will sees fit.

This brief hymn is a simple prayer for those on which the seeds of the Gospel fall, that the Word may take root in them. In it, we ask God to bless the sown seed (st. 1), keeping it from Satan’s grasp (st. 2), to yield fruit of good works (sts. 2 & 3), and that those who receive His Word may remain in His saving grace (st. 4).

The blessings of God’s kingdom—that joyful Easter message we celebrated just a few short months ago—come to us through the seed of God’s Word. The Gospel “*is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*” (Rom. 1:16) Thanks be to God for the promises He’s given to us in His Word and in His Sacraments.

Heavenly Father, with a plentiful harvest before us, grant us endurance as we serve as your instruments, sowing the seeds of Your Word. Bestow strong roots on all who hear the Gospel, keeping them in the one, true faith until life everlasting. Amen.

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Almighty God, your Word is cast like seed into the ground;
Now let the dew of heav'n descend and righteousness abound.

Let not the sly satanic foe this holy seed remove,
But give it root in ev'ry hear to bring forth fruits of love.

Let not the world's deceitful cares the rising plant destroy,
But let it yield a hundredfold the fruits of peace and joy.

So when the precious seed is sown, life-giving grace bestow
That all whose souls the truth receive, its saving pow'r may know.

Text: John Cawood, 1775-1852 This text is in the public domain. Cawood wrote this hymn (intending it to be sung after the sermon) in 1819. It has been sung by Lutherans in America since at least 1852.

[This devotion was prepared for the website of the Center for Church Music, Concordia University Chicago. It may be downloaded and printed for local use.]