

More than a Seed (16July17)
Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

Not long after I started seminary, I looked up where that word came from and discovered that seminary means "seedbed."

If we're talking about trying to plant and cultivate the seed of faith, then seminary seems sort of like an odd greenhouse for its late start. With the same word, it feels more of an artificial insemination than the natural process of growth hinted at by Jesus. But clearly you don't need to be found in a seminary to find yourself growing in faith.

That notion of a seedbed as the location to fertilize growth has had me thinking, though, about the expanse of sowing seeds. And like wheat that in dark earth many days has lain, I stuck this photocopied piece of paper in my Bible about four months ago, waiting for it like the risen grain to come forth and bear fruit. It's from the amazing book *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate, Discoveries from a Secret World*. [\(Click here to read excerpt\)](#)

Since reading it, I've been waiting for this Sunday's Bible passage to come around to share this excerpt with you, which starts out sounding like Jesus' parable, but ends up with a very different outcome.

While not trying to argue with Jesus and his parable, but as a companion parable and extending the conversation about interconnectedness from Thursday Gifts of the Garden worship, we certainly remember that you are not just an individual seed who has fallen where you may. Nor are you carefully dug into place by God's hands only to be left to grow on your own. Nor is this a matter of survival of the fittest or of lucky placement circumstances.

No, we have to extend Jesus' parable with this message from the book. So I say to you: welcome to your place here amid the forest. Keep it close. Share, and grow well.

Strengthened by the Spirit who gives us words to speak and hearts that care, let us bring our hopes and needs to God who listens.

A brief silence.

God the gardener, you cast your seeds far and wide with gracious abundance. We pray for seminaries, but trust that here also in this seed bed and amid your forest, you will guide our growth and sustain us through each other's presence. Lord, in your mercy, **you hear our prayer.**

Your parables are metaphors for us second, but first words of your engagement with creation. So we pray for seeds and farmers, for the miracle of photosynthesis and bountiful crops for all who hunger. We pray for rains that do your purpose, and that our song will be led by the mountains and hills and the clapping of trees. Lord, in your mercy, **you hear our prayer.**

In places of war, bring peace, and in places of hatred, sow love. Send your Spirit that leaders may work for the health and wellbeing of all people and creation. Lord, in your mercy, **you hear our prayer.**

You don't leave us to wither, so we pray for sustenance and nourishment for those weakened by difficult circumstances, for those struggling with depression, for those overcome by fears or apathy, for those facing illness, including Margaret Helming, Dan Schwarz, Rob Olson's sister Ann, Mary Margaret Nack, for those struggling to find housing. Lord, in your mercy, **you hear our prayer.**

You cultivate us as we gather here together. For that reason, we pray for those who are away this week, including Hildy McGown and Jan Robertson as they are at the Women of the ELCA convention, Karen Schwarz, Margaret and Lanny Smith, Janet Sabatke, Myrna and Dobbin McNatt, Betty and Corkey Custer, Sonja and David Keesey-Berg, Tina Hogle, Linda and Chuck Pils, Kathy and Doug Johnson, Kelle and Ken Adams and Jack, and Pastor Sonja.

We pray for these members this week: Lauren & Nancy Zabel, Robin & Kathy Alexander, Nancy and Don Tubesing, Gretchen & Al Wahl, Julie & Kevin Walsh, Megan and Sean. Lord, in your mercy, **you hear our prayer.**

Cultivate hope in us that you gather us into your granary for eternal life. Bless Pastor Sonja at the death of her mother and all who worship in hopeful expectation of your eternal kingdom. Lord, in your mercy, **you hear our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, God of mercy, confident that all things are in your hands. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**