

Lesson: I Isaiah 66:10-14

Second Lesson: Galations 6:1-16

Psalm 66

Gospel: Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

July 3, 2022

“Messy Harvest”

Sermon by Pastor Paul Campbell

Grace and peace to you from Him who was, who is, and who is to come, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This morning we are going to talk about a messy harvest. In our scripture readings we have a number of examples of where things can get complicated, can get messy, and we are going to talk about a messy harvest. I'm going to start with the 4th of July, fireworks and all of that. I'm going to give you an example of something that *almost* got messy, almost got complicated. I grew up in Omaha. Bellevue was really close, and that's where my aunt and uncle lived. That's where Offutt Air Force Base is, and where SAC, the Strategic Air Command, is located. It's a very big base. Every fourth of July all of the rest of the family would come from all over Iowa. We had a bunch of those old Army wool blankets that we could spread out, and they were great. We sat out, we had food and drink and everything, and the kids were all running around.

When it came time for the fireworks we knew that we had to head back to the blankets, and those fireworks were spectacular. They were always spectacular, and it never rained, at least in my memory. All of a sudden we saw something coming out of the sky, and one of the pieces of the fireworks was coming straight down at the blanket that we were sitting on! We all froze, and that ember missed everybody, but it did burn a big hole in our wool blanket. Every time we would pull that blanket out we remembered that that was a messy time, that was almost a very complicated time for us. And we remember that. Life can be messy. It can get messy.

So I'm going to do is something I normally don't do, I'm going to walk quickly through the scripture readings and point out some of these things that do really make a difference.

Psalm 66 talks about the nursing mother and baby and how special that is for both mother and child. When we were having babies, Donna and I, we had two girls and a boy, and of course they all nursed. In the middle of the night when a baby woke up, it was my job to wait until after Donna and baby had finished nursing and both of them had fallen back asleep, and then take the baby over to the table, change the diaper, burp him or her, and then put baby back to bed. Then I would go back to bed until the next round. So that was my job.

But as I stood there in the silence and in the darkness, I always wondered, what is that like? What is it like to be that connected, that dependent on someone, to be so connected, physically and emotionally? That's something I'm convinced that men can never experience, and it is something that is very, very special in a relationship. But we also know that babies can be messy. Babies cause work, babies can do all of those things on a regular basis and usually not when you want it to happen. So it is interesting that in this amazing moment, amazing time, life can get messy.

At harvest, life can get messy. That's in Isaiah 66. The Psalm that we didn't read this morning talked about the Hebrews coming through the Promised Land, and it was the time they were in bondage and going from Egypt to the Promised Land. God had sort of dried out a river so that they could cross it. It was still muddy, but the water was not flowing. And in the Bible a river or a body of water is sort of that thing that is between what's now and what's going to be. So for the Hebrews to walk through that mud reminds us that even freedom can be a muddy experience. There is a lot of mud, a lot of problems, a lot of challenges with that freedom. That is something that the Hebrews were experiencing. So it's an important image to think about that mud, and how

we can put ourselves in the place of the Hebrew people, crossing that river, coming from captivity to freedom and trudging through the mud. It's not a clean experience. In Galatians we talk about that harvest, we talk about the harvest that is so important and here it is a literal harvest. But what we are talking about this morning is that harvest of relationships, that harvest of our relationship with God, our Creator. And how that works.

We know sugar beet stories, but I'm not going to tell you any more of those right now. It's *any* harvest that can be a problem – any and every harvest has its challenges. And that is what the Gospel is talking about this morning and that is what Galatians is talking about this morning. So we get into Luke; Galatians leads right into Luke and it seems like when they put the scriptures together in order, they were trying to emphasize this point, that there is this harvest. It's God's harvest, and we need to understand that we are part of that harvest. But we also understand of course that the harvest can be messy, and *we* can be messy.

So now we get to the whole package, and the whole package of these brief Scriptures that I walked through makes a very nice scene. We have the mother and the baby, that total dependence and the total connection that we can have with God. And we have the muddy, messy life that we live sometimes. We have friendships, families break up, we have injuries, we have illnesses, all of those kinds of things, but we trudge through. That's who we are. And then we know in Galatians and in Isaiah that we are reaping the harvest of all that God has given to us, and that's reason for celebration.

How many of you know about the Brothers Grimm? Back in the 1700s they wrote over 200 children's fables and stories, and they were just amazing. I think Grimm is a very bad name for them -- they weren't grim. They wrote for children, and they made a huge impact. I want to close this up by talking about the story of the Wooden Bowl. Anybody read that, or remember it? We are going to go over it this morning. The story talks about an old man, and he was so old that he couldn't be home by himself, so he moved in with his son and daughter and grandson. And he was failing. His eyesight was failing, he shook a lot, he was a little sloppy, messy, like life is, and he would pick up his spoon and the peas would roll off onto the floor. And then he would spill his milk, and it would fall over the floor. And it was a mess all over the table. So the son said to his wife, we have to do something about this. So they built him a little table in the corner, and they prepared his plate of food and took it over to him, so he could eat all by himself over there. He still spilled the peas, and still spilled the milk, but at least it wasn't in their way.

So the little boy was really observing all of this, and was very aware of what was going on. And one day he was on the floor and he was carving something and his Dad came by and said, "What are you doing, you look like you are carving wood. What are you doing?" He said "Oh, I'm carving a bowl for when I grow up and this will be for Mom and Dad." And that just struck the Dad, obviously, and so he brought the old man back and he was able to sit at the table again.

It is that messiness of life that is part of who we are. It is part of what we have to understand, that we are helping each other. We have to be in this whole planet, in this life, together, and that's the harvest that God talks about, that's the harvest that we read about in Scripture. Yes, it's muddy, yes it's complicated, sometimes we get little burn holes in the wool. But it is always important that we are there for each other through this life. Life can be messy, but remember that we reap what we sow, and that's the point of that wooden bowl. You are going to reap what you sow. That couple did not sow patience, and they learned from their son the penalty for that.

We reap what we sow. And we sow God's good news. Amen.