

Pentecost 6 – July 12, 2020
Text: Isaiah 55:10-13
Theme: Where Did I Go Wrong?

Where did I go wrong? Ever ask yourself that question? I suspect you have. Only the most arrogant people in the world do not wonder at times how they could have messed something up so badly. And often, as we retrace our steps, we cannot even figure out where we got off the path and into such tall weeds. Parents ask that question a great deal when our kids do not behave in the manner we believed we had taught them to behave. Maybe they break the law. Maybe they are social outcasts. Maybe they don't come to church or even profess their belief in God anymore. Where did I go wrong?

The misguided logic behind that question is that you think that you can control most things. Two kids are reared in the same family with the same parents and one becomes a pastor while the other is an atheist. How does that happen? Two seeds are planted side by side and one grows into a flourishing plant while the other withers and dies. The farmer tilled the same earth for both. He fertilized both. He treated both seeds identically and yet he could not control the flourishing of one and not the other anymore than a parent can control one child flourishing and not the other.

Rather than bemoaning everything you cannot control, perhaps it would better serve us to focus on what we can control. The farmer insures that the seeds receive water and sunlight. That's all he can really control. He makes certain that all seeds receive the gifts of God. Likewise, it is all we can control whether in regard to our children, our grandchildren or the person occupying the cubical next to us at work. All we can do is offer the gifts of God and let them do whatever the Holy Spirit will do with them. That is what Isaiah is telling us today.

Our text from Isaiah might have had more impact on the people of 8th century B.C. In those days, farmers did not yet know about photosynthesis or the molecular structure of grain. They just knew that they planted seeds in the earth and trusted God to send water and sun. If the rain did not come or if there was too much sun, they would have a lean year and maybe even die of starvation. Sometimes, in our modern age, all of our scientific know how does us a disservice, because we can come to believe that science is the master. Remember that science is only our study and attempt to comprehend what God has already done. Science is good as long as God is always the master and science is always that which is mastered by God. That's why things like viruses and diseases,

earthquakes and tornados are good for us. They help remind us that God is the master and we are his humble children.

Isaiah's people understood that better than we in some ways. But they were just as vulnerable to temptation as we are. They chased after the gods called Baal and Ashera. We chase after the gods called Fox News and CNN, or Republican and Democrat, or World Health Organization and Center for Disease Control. Human beings have always been tempted to forget that only God knows what is going to happen next and he is always in complete control of everything. Just as the sun and the rain do what they are supposed to do for the earth according to his bidding, so the Word of God and the sacraments do exactly what they are supposed to do for God's people. Now, no one, including God himself because God places limitations on his own power; no one can control how a person might react to God's Word or what he does with his Word; but what is certain, is that the Word is doing what it is supposed to do. Knowing that, you and I can both be both convicted and comforted.

Be convicted if you have been placing more confidence in some other thing than God's Word. Be convicted if you allow your children to skip the things of God in order to accomplish the things of man. Be convicted if you encourage others to worry about the

things of this world at the expense of receiving God's Word and Sacrament. Think! Before you skip reading and studying God's Word. Think before you decide to be angry over social media posts instead of praying for the person with whom you disagree! This is serious business. You would never skip drinking liquid for a week because it was inconvenient or because it interferes with something else you want to do. Why would you skip nourishing your soul and communicating with your Father? People do it because they can. God won't stop you. But that does not mean that you, your children and others to whom your life is a witness are not damaged by it. Be convicted.

Be comforted if you have strived to avail yourself and the others in your circle of the Word of God whenever and wherever possible. That is to say that you worshipped, read your Bible, remembered your Baptism, received the Sacrament and encouraged everyone around you to do likewise. Never believe that it will accomplish what you want it to accomplish. It will not. Praise God that it will accomplish that for which He sent it. And do not be critical of yourself or others when God's Word and sacraments do not do what you expected them to do. It will accomplish that for which God sent it, and it will accomplish it every single time. Our only job is to receive the gifts and

encourage others to do the same instead of being lazy, or preoccupied or so caught up in our worldly drama that we have no time for God.

Recently a proud grandpa told me how his toddler grandson folded his hands when they prayed before dinner without being told to do so. That's the Word of God at work. That's why meal time prayer, Bible stories and regular family worship are so important. All of that is giving God's Word an opportunity to do what it is supposed to do – that is, to create, sustain and grow faith. Christ's gifts overflow as his Word enters us, his water of Baptism washes over us and his body and blood fill us. We cannot control what a human being with free will might do with the gifts. All we can do is deliver them. What is more, we do not want to control what is done with the gifts because God is infinitely more powerful and more creative than we are. We are just the conduit, the delivery system, the pipes carrying water from the well. God's the artist, and when we humble ourselves and quietly watch him work, we will be astounded by his creation over and over again. Where did you go wrong? Nowhere. Everywhere. Who cares? Get over yourself. Be patient. Our artistic God is at work in all of us.