Pastor George Matranga's sermon 7/12/26 based on Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

"A Sower Went Out to Sow"

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text is the Gospel lesson that was read to you and particularly the words "a sower went out to sow."

I have become acquainted with YouTube. I confess the reason was that I was looking for news on the Sacramento Kings for the past couple of months, and what I noticed was that along with that news there was stuff on religion. It made me realize just how foolish YouTube is. A sharing of human ignorance. There are no controls. I saw information, misinformation, dis-information, and even outright lies. Most of what I saw concerning religion on YouTube was just sensationalism. . . and horrifying! Like "What are they hiding from you?" "But now we are going to tell you the truth." Particularly with religion, I noticed stuff on the Dead Sea Scrolls. It sounded like "people" have been hiding what is really going on with the scrolls. For your information, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947. It has taken so long for information to be disclosed because the scrolls are so precious and fragile that the scholarly world is trying to open them, preserve them, and get them out to the scholars to sort all this stuff out and then get them published. All of this has been made public to those interested for 45 years. It's just that nobody came knocking on your door advertising it and telling you the news.

The YouTube news about Noah's Ark was just as astonishing. Implying that information was hidden and authorities did not want you to know. When I was in seminary in the early1960's my Old Testament professor told us that there were reports that someone had been flying over Turkey in a small plane and spotted something that looked like a boat on top of one of the mountains, but couldn't really identify it. (The bible talks about the ark coming down on the "mountains of Ararat" -- not Mount Ararat but the mountains of Ararat.) The pilot had spotted something on the shoulder of a mountain. The problem was, first, that it was in a very remote area, and secondly there were just a few weeks during the summer that anything could be investigated. So it took it years for much information to be gathered. Even to this day; all we know is that there is an outline of a ship or boat and something organic underneath. Maybe an ark or maybe Noah's ark, but we can't be sure of anything else yet. So when more evidence is in and maybe less snow on that mountain, we will hear about it.

Nobody has been hiding anything from you. . . except God. God hides. That's what I want to talk to you about today. A God who hides and a God who reveals.

Why would God hide anything? What kind of God would do that? Let's go back and look at Jesus' ministry for a minute. Jesus' ministry lasted for a period of about 3 years. The first year is known as The Year of Obscurity, when this 30-year-old itinerant guy went out and started preaching. Hardly anyone knew anything about him as he talked about the Kingdom of God. The second year was the Year of Popularity, when great crowds came out to hear him. In this case he spoke to them by the sea. That's why it's called the Sermon by the Sea. He had to get out in a boat to speak to all those on the shore. It is interesting in those days a rabbi sat and people stood to listen. Want to try that now? The

third year has been called The Year of Opposition. It was the year that enemies started gathering and criticizing him.

So what happens? Near the end of the 2nd year something unusual started happening. It wasn't unusual that Jesus was praying because he prayed all the time. It was unusual that it happens in Matthew's Gospel and the only other time this happens is in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus sits and prays. You heard about that first prayer in the gospel reading from last Sunday. Remember our Lord spontaneously turns to heaven and says, "I thank you my heavenly Father that you have hidden them from the wise and foolish and revealed them to babes" God has hidden. . . and God has revealed. This sets the theme. Why would God hide? Perhaps God should be more obvious. Maybe He should roll down this huge speaker from heaven and say "This is God from heaven." Or even better "Look you Sacramentans, I am going to appear outside the Golden1 Center at 4 o'clock this afternoon and you can come and look at me and then know for sure that there is a God, and It is Me, And then you can go home and have supper." What's the matter with that? Would that do any good? I want you to remember when Jesus appeared to Doubting Thomas and his words. He said "Thomas, have you seen me and so believed? Blessed are those who have not seen but believe." Scriptures say the devils believed and they trembled. The blessing comes from believing when you haven't seen Him.

Think about this. What you and I need is not having our curiosity satisfied. What we need is faith. And one problem is that nobody ever really has described faith to us. Faith to us is kind of a proposition or conviction that results in trust. But really, Faith is something else.
Faith is a relationship. I want you to do something for me. I want you to open a little hole in your head and I want to pour something in that you will never, never forget. It is the definition of faith. Faith is the relationship I have with God through Jesus
Christ. Faith is how babies know their mothers. They don't know their social security number or cell number. But hey know their mothers better than anyone else. Faith is knowing your Father by the works of the Holy Spirit.

So God plays this game of Hide N Seek. In the Old Testament, most of the time, he was a hidden God. Every once in a while, He shows Himself but people never really saw Him but they knew He was there. Those who have faith, they know He is with them all the time.

God hides in the baby.

God hides in this unknown Jewish rabbi.

God hides in this rabbi when he dies as a criminal on the cross.

God hides in the tomb on Holy Saturday.

God hides in the words of absolution.

God hides in the bread and the wine. He is there if you have faith to see Him.

From this point on in Jesus' ministry, he is going to have this new formula. He is going to speak to the crowds in parables. A parable is like a story or illustration that is thrown alongside the truth. In parables, there is one point of comparison. Don't try to press any of the details. Jesus is going to speak in a parabolic way so that people are left wondering "What does this mean?". To his disciples, to the

twelve, he is going to speak privately and going to explain everything. What is he going to teach them? He talked of many things in parables but parables are about the kingdom of God, How the rule and reign of God are working here in Jesus Christ. They all have to do with His kingdom. This the crux. Then He tells them of the parable of the sower and the soil.

We call it the parable of the sower. Jesus explains it as a parable of the soil. And what it explains is why it is that not everyone believes. If the word of the Kingdom is being heard, how come we are getting these mixed reactions? To some it gets there in their head and starts to take root but gets burnt out. To some people the cares and anxieties of life cause it to die. It is all different. The disciples need to understand why his ministry is getting different reactions, and why this is going to lead to his rejection and death. But it is also a prophecy. He's entrusting them with the word. They are then the sowers and they need to understand that the preacher can't just go out and sow it willy-nilly. It doesn't work that way. We don't understand why and we don't need to understand why. We just need to live with the situation and keep going. So we have a sowing in this church and among you people and you witness to others. Sometimes it works the way we think it should work and sometimes we have to watch and see what God has in mind.

Because I don't think the point of the parable is about the soil at all. I think it is about the sower. What is there about the sower? He goes out to sow his seed and his sowing is so irresponsible.

When I was a young man in my 30s, I was a man of the soil. I would work in my garden, change my own motor oil, mow my own lawn. Back then people did things themselves. We were mid-westerners. We planted tomatoes. We planted corn. One year it was a very hot summer and we were on vacation in August. Unfortunately, it didn't rain. Our neighbor put water on it but not enough. We had zucchini squash and pumpkins and the hybrid zucchini took over the whole patch. I can remember the planting: preparing the soil, very carefully poking the hole and dropping the seed in it, then covering it up. I did it this way because I was a gardener. Then I came to California. One time I stopped on a road just north of town. I almost got a haircut. A small plane swooped in very close to my head, flew over a field and dropped a whole load of seed. Right then I understood the difference between planting and sowing. Jesus is talking about a sower. Like a wild crazy Johnny Appleseed who goes around singing his wonderful songs, grabbing handfuls of grain and tossing them up and out, letting the wind take it, He doesn't care where it falls. He is lavish and extravagant with it. He will pay the price. Even if it take everything. But he doesn't discriminate between the soils. If it lands on a sidewalk that's okay. Good soil, that's okay. Somewhere it won't grow, that's okay. He is here to sow. That lavishness; that wonderful grace of God in Jesus Christ! He will always try to give the soils the chance to produce no matter what.

That is why we come and sit here Sunday after Sunday. Because the sower is here. And He trusts the word and He trusts that it has the power to take root and grow. He has given every kind of soil a chance to do that. In my heart, I know that there are times, that it has bounced off the hard soil. Very few times it has taken root and produced a whole lot. Think about yourself. At various times, you have been different kinds of soil. I guess that's to be expected, and maybe in a way it's okay. The parable is not about us. It is about this wonderful sower who was and is willing to sow. No matter the cost.

We pray that God's good Word keeps coming to us, keeps taking root in us, and produces good fruits in us. May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen