



“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

~Matthew 13:31-32

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
9th Sunday after Pentecost – July 26, 2026

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Rev. Katie McNeal, Presiding Minister

Maizy Fisher, Director of Music Ministries

*We are delighted to have you worship with us this morning!
Know that you are welcome here just as you are.*

If you are looking for a church to call home, why not consider making this one your own? If this is your first time worshipping at St. John, please fill out the visitor information card stapled to your bulletin.

*At the time of **Offering**, you are invited to share a gift. Envelopes are available in the pews if you prefer. Online gifts may be made using the QR code below:*



*As Lutherans, we believe Christ is truly present in the elements of the Lord's Supper. At the time of **Holy Communion**, all baptized individuals are welcome to come forward via the center aisle, receive the elements, and return via the side aisles. We begin at the front of the right side, commune all on the right side, then we will invite the left side forward. When you come forward, you may receive the bread from the pastor (gluten free wafers are available), then pre-filled cups with wine or grape juice from the assisting minister. You may consume the elements after receiving them then place the empty cup in the tray held by the acolyte. Those who do not receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.*

PRELUDE and ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity,† one God, whose compassion endures forever. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin to God. *Silence is kept for reflection.*

Compassionate God, **we confess to you all our sins.**

Our burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves.

In your mercy, call us back to you. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light.

Restore us to dwell in your peace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

We hear a word of forgiveness

***GATHERING HYMN *Gather Us In* (ELW 532)**



1 Here in this place the new light is stream-ing, now is the dark - ness
 2 We are the young, our lives are a mys - t'ry, we are the old who
 3 Here we will take the wine and the wa - ter, here we will take the
 4 Not in the dark of build-ings con - fin - ing, not in some heav - en,



van - ished a - way; see in this space our fears and our dream-ings
 yearn for your face; we have been sung through-out all of his - t'ry,
 bread of new birth, here you shall call your sons and your daugh-ters,
 light years a - way— here in this place the new light is shin - ing,



brought here to you in the light of this day.
 called to be light to the whole hu - man race.
 call us a - new to be salt for the earth.
 now is the king - dom, and now is the day.



Gath-er us in, the lost and for - sak - en, gath-er us in, the
 Gath-er us in, the rich and the haugh-ty, gath-er us in, the
 Give us to drink the wine of com-pas - sion, give us to eat the
 Gath-er us in and hold us for - ev - er, gath-er us in and



blind and the lame; call to us now, and we shall a - wak - en,
 proud and the strong; give us a heart, so meek and so low - ly,
 bread that is you; nour-ish us well, and teach us to fash - ion
 make us your own; gath-er us in, all peo - ples to - geth - er,



we shall a - rise at the sound of our name.
 give us the cour - age to en - ter the song.
 lives that are ho - ly and hearts that are true.
 fire . . of love in our flesh and our bone.

***GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

*PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

You are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of peace. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcome to offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.).

*CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Refrain



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and
peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

1 Lord God, heav-en - ly King, al - might-y God and Fa - ther,
we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you

Refrain
for your glo - ry. Glo - ry to God in the high-
est, the high - est, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

(continued)

2 Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God,
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world: have mer - cy on us; you are seat - ed at the
right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.
Refrain
Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and
peace to God's peo - ple on earth. 3 For you a -
lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,
you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the
Ho - ly Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther.
A - men. A - men. A - men.
Final refrain
Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and peace to God's
peo - ple on earth. Glo - ry to God in the high -
est, the high - est, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. **Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 8:26-39

These words celebrate the depth of God's actions for us. Through Christ's death for us and the activity of the Spirit praying for us, we are fused to God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. Nothing, not even death itself, is able to separate us from such incredible divine love.

A reading from Romans.

²⁶ The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



*GOSPEL READING: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near!" Here, Jesus offers several brief parables that explore the implications of this announcement for people's lives.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

³¹ [Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

³³ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." ⁵² And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

*HYMN OF THE DAY *God of Grace and God of Glory* (ELW 705)

1 God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple
2 Lo! The hosts of e - vil round us scorn the Christ, as -
3 Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to
4 Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils

pour your pow'r; crown your an - cient chur - ch's sto - ry;
sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us
your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,
we de - plore; let the gift of your sal - va - tion

bring its bud to glo - rious flow'r. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age
free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age
rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
be our glo - ry ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,

for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.
for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.
lest we miss your king - dom's goal, lest we miss your king - dom's goal.
serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

*APOSTLES' CREED

Let us confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

On the third day he rose again;

**he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Trusting in God's steadfast love for all God has made,

We pray for....

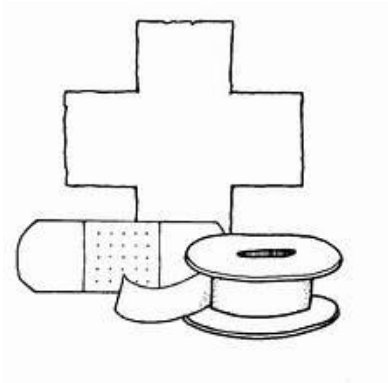
The world



The ministries of the church



People who are hurting



Ourselves



And all God's children say:

Amen!

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

COLLECTION OF THE OFFERING

You are invited to share a gift to support the ministries of this congregation during the following song. Envelopes are available in the pews if you prefer. Ongoing prayer requests, connection cards, and communion records are also collected in the offering plates.

OFFERTORY HYMN *Be Thou My Vision* (ELW 793)



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,



naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!



thou my best thought both by day and by night,
Thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tow'r,
thou and thou on - ly, the first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

*OFFERING PRAYER

Loving God, we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts.

Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love,
so that all creation can taste your abundance.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever.

Amen.

*GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

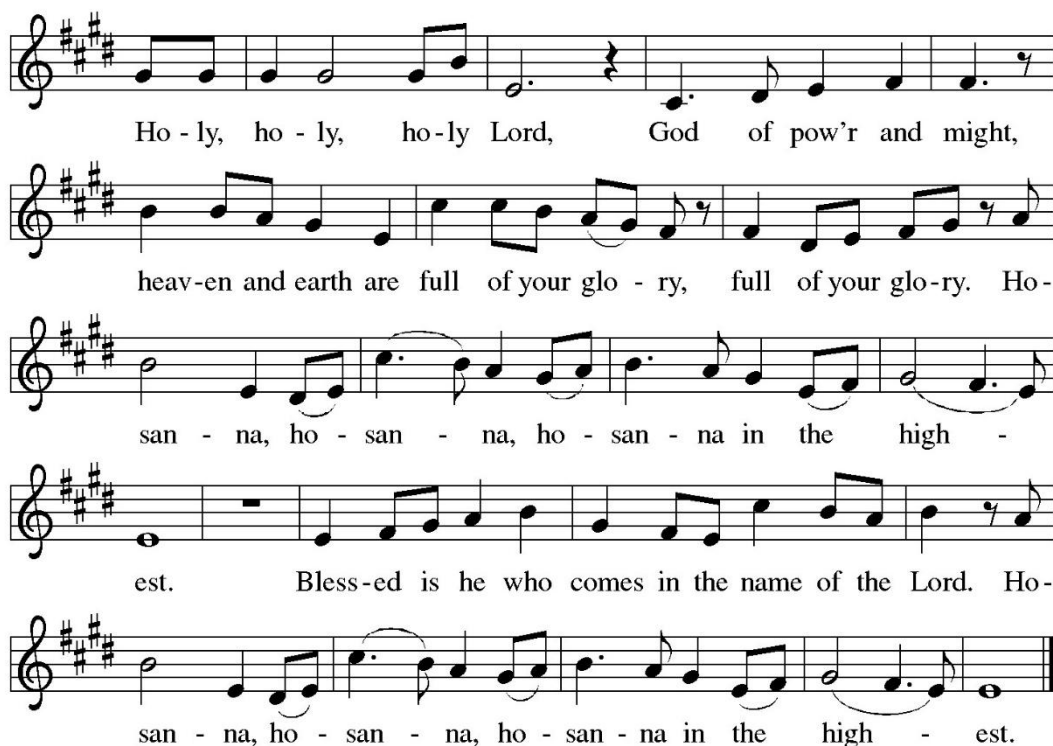
Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



The musical score is written for a single voice part in treble clef, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The score consists of five lines of music.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry, full of your glo-ry. Ho -
san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high -
est. Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever.
Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray:
**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen**

*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Heaven has come near. Come, share in the feast!

Taste and see that the Lord is good. This meal is for you.

Thanks be to God!

Through this meal, we know forgiveness, life, and salvation as the blessings of God's sacramental grace. In response to Jesus' invitation, all baptized individuals are welcome to come forward and experience the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. Those who do not receive the bread and wine are invited to come forward for a blessing. Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available upon request. Communion may also be brought back to the pews for those who are unable to come forward.

COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God*

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have

mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the

world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the

world; grant us peace, grant us peace, Lamb of God.

COMMUNION HYMN *We Eat the Bread of Teaching* (ELW 518)

Refrain



We eat the bread of teach-ing, drink wine of wis-dom, are



giv-en here a taste of the king-dom. To-geth-er



joined, the great-est and the least, we all are



one at Wis-dom's ho-ly feast.



1 Wis-dom calls through-out the cit-y, knows our
 2 Sim-ple ones whose hearts are yearn-ing, come and
 3 En-ter with de-light and sing-ing, for her



hun-ger, and in pit-y gives her lov-ing in-vi-
 gain from Wis-dom's learn-ing; bread and wine she is pre-
 rich-ness now is bring-ing us this joy-ous cel-e-

Refrain



ta-tion to the ban-quet of sal-va-tion.
 par-ing, know her lov-ing in the shar-ing.
 bra-tion; eat and drink in ju-bi-la-tion.

COMMUNION HYMN *All My Hope on God is Founded* (ELW 757)

1. All my hope on God is founded
who will all my trust renew,
who through change and chance will guide
me,
only good and only true.
God unknown, God alone,
call my heart to be thine own.

3. Great thy goodness, e'er enduring;
deep thy wisdom, passing thought;
splendor, light, and life attend thee,
beauty springing out of naught.
Evermore from thy store
newborn worlds rise and adore.

2. Mortal pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tow'r and temple, fall to dust.
But thy pow'r, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tow'r.

4. Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of God's own Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

***POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and preserve you in grace.
Amen

***POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Compassionate God, through the gifts of bread and wine our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love. Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal, may share your love freely, as you have shared with us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***BLESSING**

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, ✠ one God, bless, heal, and hold you today and always.
Amen.

***SENDING SONG *Have You Thanked the Lord* (ELW 829)**

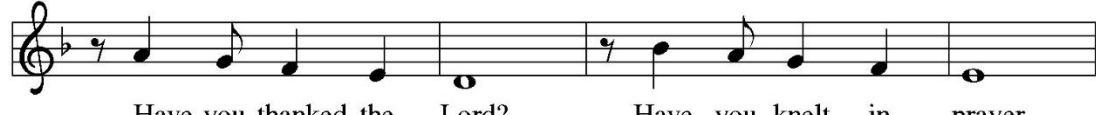
Refrain



Have you thanked the Lord? Have you praised God's name?



Don't you know that no to - mor - row is quite the same?



Have you thanked the Lord? Have you knelt in prayer,



and re-joiced that, rain or sun-shine, our God is there?



1 Hal - le - lu - jah! Thank the Lord for sun, sand, and sea,
 2 Hal - le - lu - jah! Par - a - dise we taste where we are;
 3 Hal - le - lu - jah! Joy and peace the Sav - ior will bring.



ev - 'ry star at night that shines for you and me.
 sum - mer breez - es, win - ter warmth are nev - er far.
 Grace a - maz - ing! So we lift our voice and sing,



Bless - ings so man - y come our way:
 God's love is ev - er on dis - play:
 grate - ful when clouds are bright or gray:

Refrain



have you thanked the Lord to - day?
 have you thanked the Lord to - day?
 have you thanked the Lord to - day?

***DISMISSAL**

Heaven has come near. Go, share the good news!
Thanks be to God.

Assisting in worship today:

Assisting Minister: Volunteer

Acolyte: Volunteer

Offering: Volunteers

Notes for the day's texts:

A string of parables describe the kingdom of heaven, and then we hear Jesus' question: "Have you understood all this?" The mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, pearls—these bring good news of growth and joy and riches. Then come the fish, the furnace of fire, and the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Once again this week we hear of a God of mercy and justice. Once again there is good news to be heard in Paul's letter to the church at Rome—nothing will ever separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. How will we reconcile these two images of God?

Furthermore, each of these parables involves a good bit of earthiness. Each one has the principal actors getting dirty: seeds planted, treasure buried, doughy hands, fishing, clamming. The phrase "life is messy" is true, and bringing the kingdom of God to bear appears to be a little messy too. How can we see God even through all the mess? How is it worthwhile to work for God's reign, even when it gets messy?

Today's Music

Gather Us In. Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950, Music: Marty Haugen. GIA Publications, Inc..

God of Grace and God of Glory. Text: Harry E. Fosdick, 1878-1969, Music: John Hughes, 1873-1932. Public Domain.

Be Thou My Vision. Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931, Music: Irish traditional. Public Domain.

We Eat the Bread of Teaching. Text: Omer Westendorf, 1916-1997, Music: Jerry Ray Brubaker, b. 1946. World Library Publications, a division of GIA Publications, Inc..

All My Hope on God is Founded. Text: Joachim Neander, 1650-1680; para. Robert Bridges, 1844-1930, alt., Music: Herbert Howells, 1892-1983. Public Domain / G. Schirmer, Inc.

Have You Thanked the Lord. Text: Bill LaMotta, 1919-1980, Music: Bill LaMotta. Joyce A. Lamotta / Augsburg Fortress.

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Next Week's Readings

Genesis 32:22-31 *Jacob receives a blessing from God*

Psalms 17:1-7, 15 *I shall see your face; when I awake, I shall be satisfied. (Ps. 17:15)*

Romans 9:1-5 *The glory of God's people Israel*

Matthew 14:13-21 *Christ feeding five thousand*

Find the words in the word bank below! Can you use the words in the word bank to retell the parables in today's gospel reading?

E	R	U	P	W	C	W	R	M	P	P	D	H	R	O
C	E	A	T	E	E	J	E	Q	J	M	E	E	E	F
C	C	C	N	H	A	R	T	G	K	U	N	A	O	J
C	E	O	T	T	U	R	P	V	R	S	E	V	N	Y
H	U	T	X	S	S	G	L	S	I	T	V	E	V	O
W	A	B	A	J	K	A	B	B	O	A	A	N	Y	V
M	E	E	N	K	F	I	E	L	D	R	E	Y	N	D
P	R	N	S	B	I	X	P	Y	L	D	L	F	X	F
T	D	E	N	B	T	N	M	A	O	C	I	F	K	C
B	E	J	E	S	U	S	G	W	R	S	E	G	C	F
D	U	Q	T	Y	D	U	D	D	H	A	P	V	K	G
S	T	S	E	N	J	W	B	I	O	Q	B	B	F	B
D	O	O	T	S	R	E	D	N	U	M	L	L	J	K
P	K	Z	U	B	H	B	O	E	V	T	A	R	E	K
Z	L	F	O	H	K	D	R	S	M	L	L	M	E	Y

Word Bank

field
Jesus
Matthew
net
parable
treasure

fish
kingdom
mustard
new
pearl
understood

heaven
leavened
nests
old
seed
yeast