

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



July 12, 2026

THE BOAT

Jesus's amplifier and moat

by Drew Downs

One of the undersold elements in today's reading of the gospels was how dangerous Jesus's growing fame was. How physically dangerous the crowd was to the people and to the subject of their obsession. A few times, Jesus puts some distance between himself and the people. In this week's gospel, he gets into a boat to push off from shore a little way. It serves to amplify his voice and to put a barrier between himself and the crowds.

This is also starting to become more overt in the gospel, as it describes for the first time in chapter 12, that the religious authorities are seeking a mortal solution to their Jesus problem. And I can't help but think of those people of faith today who are willing to punish, oppress, and even kill for Jesus. To prove something, perhaps. And yet, how unlike the hospitable soil such dispositions are. And how easily God's good seeds can disappear in such evangelism.

ORDINARY TIME

2026

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Fellowship Time

Over the next few weeks we will be experimenting with volunteers hosting our fellowship time after the 10:00 service; that time we often call Coffee Hour. Our hope is that we might share in the responsibility for preparing and cleaning up after our time together.

While this seems natural, our local practice suggests it is anything but. We have a long history of relying on someone to set things up for us and clean up after us. This, of course, allows the rest of us to "attend" church on Sunday, visit for a few minutes, and then go about our day. And while all of our people give in a variety of ways, this is one place where our giving is not so evenly distributed.

And yet, it is also a place where efforts to contribute have not always been welcomed. This, too, is part of our local practice.

What I hope we can develop over the next few weeks is a commitment to shared responsibility. That we give different people the opportunity to host, to offer their generosity to the community through this humble service. That the work can be done, yes, but also that work might be more broadly shared by the community. This isn't just to make things easier for everyone, but more *normal*. More of what we all do. To share in these responsibilities as a church community.

Some ideas for hosting include: celebrating a big occasion in your life, wanting to try out a new recipe without having to eat it all yourself, sharing pictures from a vacation, or just wanting to have some quiet time in the kitchen washing dishes. We'll help you figure out the coffee maker.

With love,
Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 10A

July 12, 2026

Collect

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the

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cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Reflection

One of the lessons of the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12) is that Jesus isn't describing kinds of people, but postures and behaviors anyone can take. That passage has made me allergic to seeing this as Jesus speaking in platitudes about all people or as if he sees people as static and permanently formed blocks of concrete.

When reading this teaching, we might be tempted to think of ourselves and our neighbors with such concrete convictions. After all, we are examining how hospitable our soil is. But the point is not to evaluate the person, but to improve the soil that is our character. And our community's character.

Notice that it isn't about talent or personality that Jesus speaks to, but how one combines the good news with one's approach to their environment. If it is only about joy, then one's joy can be stolen. If one makes joy into a mantra, it'll break when life gets difficult. But then, if we are super rational, then the junk of the world will consume us.

It seems that, for Jesus, by contrast, the good soil is defined by integration and intention. It requires self-examination, what we might call discernment, so that we might form a more integrated approach. That we might be joyful and realistic and hopeful. This, he argues, is the most hospitable soil for growth. Spiritual growth for ourselves, sure, but also for the community and all of the people around us.

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