

Christ Episcopal Church

Sermon for July 12, 2026 | Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

The Rev'd Deacon Nancy Sartin

Good morning! What a beautiful day to celebrate the baptism of Eleanor Hope Hutchinson!

Today's gospel scripture is one of my all-time favorites, The Parable of the Sower. Parables and metaphors are two of the best ways to teach others. We start with something that is familiar to the learner and build new knowledge on to the topic. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus is using 2 metaphors: the metaphor of the seed as the word of God and the receptiveness of the soil or ground as it relates to our hearts. The people were well acquainted with the importance of seeds during this time because life depended on growing crops to survive.

When I was in the classroom, I loved our lessons on the life cycle of plants. We studied every part of the plant and how it grows. The culminating activity was for us to plant a garden using carefully selected seeds and preparing our soil by tilling and fertilizing for the optimum results.

First, let's look at the structure and potential of a simple seed. Here is a bag of lima beans... most of my students could not imagine how many actual bean plants were in the bag. Let's talk about what is locked away inside each seed. Inside each of these lima beans is the potential for an entire new plant that will produce many more seeds, that will produce more plants and more seeds and so on. The word of God as encountered in the scriptures are much the same. I can read a scripture once and gather one meaning and at another time, an entirely different meaning or potential comes to light. Its wisdom and comfort never end.

Now I can take this bag of seeds and leave it on my shelf for weeks, months and years and that potential remains. Seeds have been found in the pyramids after thousands of years that have been successfully sprouted and grown! The Bible itself can be left on a shelf or nightstand and the potential is there but never realized simply because it is never opened.

Each seed has a built-in protection to be able to survive for so long and still be viable. That protection is its seed coat and just like a coat we wear, it keeps weather from affecting the seed. It is very difficult to break through the seed coat without damaging the potential of the seed. Think about people you may have encountered that have put up a layer of protection for their hearts. Protection from life's disappointments, emotional hurt, sadness, isolation, heartbreak etc. Those layers can be terribly difficult to break through. And for the potential that God has in mind for each of us must come from our hearts.

The magic that breaks through the seed coat is water. That's right, nothing can start the process except water. Something so simple and yet life as we know it cannot exist without water. Jesus offers us living water so that we will never be thirsty again. In today's baptism, Eleanor will be baptized with Holy water and this will begin her life as a Christian. Her parents and Godparents are taking this step to dedicate her to God. They are preparing the way for her journey with

God. Her baptism will start the process of “germination” or new birth towards her development as a Christian.

For our lima bean -

The seedcoat will split and fall away and the tiny plant inside will come alive. The 2 tiny leaves hidden in the seed will begin to develop. The part of the seed that gives the bean its shape actually becomes food for the developing plant. The plant needs nourishment as its development begins while it cannot make food for itself.

During Eleanor’s early years her family will provide spiritual nourishment and navigation through life’s weeds and thorns. As part of our own Baptismal covenant, we are called to do the same for sweet Eleanor as she grows up.

As Eleanor grows it is our prayer that she puts down strong roots in her spiritual development...roots that will nourish her through the trials and tribulations of this earthly life. Eleanor will be anchored in the knowledge of God’s love for her and his purpose for her life.

Soon the after our seed puts down the beginnings of a root system, the stem grows up strong to support the leaves that will enable the plant to make its own food. As Eleanor continues to grow, we hope that her mind and soul will have a hunger for more knowledge of God and his love for her. We hope that she will continue to learn more about God’s word and how to apply it to her own life. During this time, we pray that she will be a light to others and is able to draw them to Christ. She will be ready to scatter her own seeds into the world.

Now I realize that there is more to this parable than the seed and the job each seed has. We are to scatter the seeds near and far and in the parable, it does not seem as though the Sower cares where they are to land. He does not seem to make any judgement on the placement. He does his job in faith that Christ will allow some of his word to sprout and grow. And we are called to do the same. Some seed will land on hard rocky soil, some will land in the thorns and be choked out and a few will land on good soil where they will thrive and reproduce a hundred times over. We are to trust God with that part as we carry out our part.

And now, let’s get ready to welcome the newest and cutest Christian into the world. AMEN!