

August 7, 2022 9th Sunday after Pentecost
Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope

Genesis 15:1-6, Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
Luke 12:32-34

[The Seed Keeper, Diane Wilson, page 1-2.]

Grace and peace, faith and trust and hope, to you, beloved of Christ Jesus. Amen.

In her novel, **The Seed Keeper**, Diane Wilson, tells the story of generations of Dakota woman who have literally and figuratively, spiritually, kept the seeds.

They stitched the tiny seeds into the hems of clothing during the war in 1862, in southern Minnesota.

Their families were hungry, separated and on the move,
and stitch after stitch the little round seeds are kept safely.

They stashed the seeds in cache pits in the forest, below-ground root cellars of a sort,
preserving the seeds until they could be unearthed and used.

With trust, they planted and cared for the seeds,
adding tobacco and prayers, gratitude and acknowledgement,
trust that these seeds would grow to nourish their people,
and that they'd a provision for the next season's planting.

They passed the seeds from one to the next, teaching the ways of planting and prayer, repeating the stories, trusting the future.

The Seed Keeper is one those novels that is equally fiction and fact.

Seeds of truth are tendrils through each chapter.

At the start of the book we hear the voice an old woman, Darlene Kills Deer, one of the last of her generation.

This seed keeper, Darlene, is living in the city,
still keeping the seeds,
still growing corn,
still holding painful and joyful stories that must be told.

Darlene describes a pivotal interaction, curiously wondering:

"What did you think when you walked into my small room?"

One side a pharmacy of pills stacked near an old woman's recliner.

The other side, by my window, a garden made of buckets and cans packed with precious soil I carried from the city's rose garden."

Darlene explains: "I went at night, just after dusk, and filled my bucket nearly to the top,
allowing a bit of room to spill,
to lose a precious inch on the bus ride home when the *wasicu* [the white people]
would glare as if no one wanted to sit too close to the crazy Indian with her heavy pail.

No one offered to help when they watched me bump and drag that pail through the door.

Phhh. I did not need their help.

In each container, I placed a single seed...

People told me it couldn't be done.

No. They said it shouldn't be done.

Not on the third floor of an apartment building for elders.

Think of the mess.

Think of the inconvenience.

Think of the strangeness of it.

I could only shrug my shoulders, thinking of their strangeness in not seeing the absolute necessity for what I was doing."

Dear friends in Christ, I'm thinking this morning of the necessity, the absolute necessity of Darlene's seed keeping, and our seed keeping, our seeds of hope, seeds of faith, seeds of trust.

Today we focus on the passage from Hebrews that begins:

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

So begins a litany of sorts,

by faith this happened, by faith that happened.

The word that we often read in English as Faith, in Greek is *Pistos*.

We could as easily, and perhaps even better use the word Trust.

In the heady culture that I come from, the word Faith has taken on doctrinal weight, things we should (or think we should) understand with our brains.

In truth so much of faith is a body thing, a heart thing, indeed, a Trust thing.

For example: I don't fully understand, but I Trust enough that by grace, by the Spirit,

I can take that step,

or squeeze the hand in mine,

or let go,

or go on.

Trust.

Often when you see that word Faith in the Bible, you can switch it out for the word Trust, since either is a translation.

Try it sometime: Instead of reading Faith, read Trust.

See how it changes the meaning for you, it can be powerful.

Hebrews chapter 11, then, is a litany, if you will, a Litany of Faith, a Litany of Trust.

Some of it we heard this morning in the reading, and there's more. I'm paraphrasing:

By trust we understand that the worlds began with the word of God.

By trust Abraham and Sarah birthed Isaac.

By trust the generations ventured into God's promise.

And it goes on and on, a recap of the highlights of the salvation story.

At one point the writer of Hebrews says something like, time would fail me to write of Gideon and Barak, Samson, and David and Samuel, of the woman at the tomb, and so many others.

By trust...

And then this section concludes at the start of chapter 12-we'll hear it next Sunday in worship:

"Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness [all those who have lived by trust], let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us."

With all that trust, with all these witnesses, names we know and names we don't,

those from ancient times and those still now, with all these seeds of trust, therefore... we go on.

This Litany of Trust begs for our own honest additions.

I've played a bit, more truly prayed a bit, and I am curious what else you'd add:

By trust we rise each morning.

By trust we dare to love each other.

By trust we care for children, when it's easy and when it's hard.

By trust we take time to rest, to renew.

By trust we venture into conversations that are hard, vulnerable.

By trust we face our mortality.

By trust we keep vigil and mourn for those who die.

By trust comes healing, health.

By trust we adapt to changing bodies.

By trust we show up, bringing our whole selves.

By trust we fall in love, we do the work to stay in love.

By trust we let love change, and grow, and sometimes end.

By trust we love again.

By trust we forgive one another.

By trust we forgive ourselves.

By trust we face addiction and repair relationships.

By trust we work through mental health realities, and physical health challenges.

By trust we care for one another in times of need.

By trust we ask for help, by trust we accept help.

By trust we care for the earth, by trust we vote.

By trust we cross borders in search of safety and a life for our families.

By trust we plant gardens and grow beauty.

By trust we meet our neighbors.

By trust we pray for Ukraine, for Israel and Palestine, for the people of Kentucky and Ethiopia.

By trust we gather with others, we listen, we speak our truth.

By trust we enter into pain, we repair what is broken.

By trust we share the bread, we drink the cup, we are forgiven and sustained.

By trust we are washed in the waters, claimed as God's own.

By trust we dare follow the Spirit's call.

As one of my friends wrote yesterday, by trust we keep showing up even when it gets really hard.

What else might you add?

Take some time this week to add more lines to this Litany of Trust.

Dear ones, picture Darlene Kills Deer,

quietly determined, lugging her heavy buckets of dirt home on the city bus.

Ready to plant her precious seeds, trusting that this is absolutely what she must do.

No question, this is just what you do.

Beloved, let us be keepers of the seeds of trust, the seeds of faith.

For these seeds are necessities, vital links between what has been and what will be,

seeds of hope for a people of hope. Thanks be to God.

Amen.