**2-17-19**

**Inch by inch, row by row**

Jeremiah 17: 5-10 1 Cor. 15: 1-11 Luke 6: 17-26

RR: Psalm 1

**Summary:** Summary: Blessing and woe are set before us in the garden of our Earth and of our lives. God grant that we tend His seeds because the time is close at hand.

It looks like songs Have been inspiring links to what I feel called to say about our lectionary passages lately. The Beatles have weighed in twice recently and now it is Arlo Guthrie’s turn. Jeremiah and Arlo give voice to one of God’s themes that our emphasis on Universal Salvation tends to diminish, namely: the urgency of human decision and effort.

We believe God’s love and blessing will prevail, that all hearts will turn to our Father and that we shall all find our way home with God’s help. But, as the prophet, and God, knows: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.”

From this verse shine two truths: first, our only hope is Jesus the Great Physician who, alone, can understand the human heart because He has one. Second, God tests the human heart and mind and will give to each of us according to our ways. That we believe God will turn our hearts and minds to the right does not diminish the urgency of the call to trust God and plant a good garden with Him.

“Plant your rows straight and long; season them with prayer and song. Inch by inch, row by row, gonna make this garden grow, gonna mulch it deep and low, gonna make it fertile ground.Pullin’ weeds and picking’ stones, we are made of dreams and bones. We need a place to call our own ‘cause God’s time is close at hand.”

God’s time is more than close at hand, Jesus preaches, “Now is the acceptable year of the Lord!” Hence, the message is urgent!

“Grain for grain, sun and rain, find our way in nature’s chain till our bodies and our brains tell the music of God’s land**.”** Not only does this echo God’s plan as told in the creation stories, not only does this echo Jeremiah, but Arlo also sings the message of Paul in 1 Cor. 15.

Paul’s message of first importance is Christ, His Cross, and His Resurrection. Because of this, all the apostles, the eyewitnesses of Jesus, preach and labor – but not they, but the grace of God with them. So, whether it was Paul or another apostle, so they preached and so we believed.

“Please, God, bless these seeds we sow, Please, God, keep us safe here below till the rain comes tumbling down.”

Jesus, having just called the 12 apostles, including Judas who would betray Him, heals and preaches with a vast multitude. He speaks of blessing and He speaks of woe. And to go on for just one more line, Jesus starts to teach; “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you.”

If this is done, and it can only be done by you who hear, it will be the latter rain of the Holy Spirit, the second Pentecost and the answer to what the entire Creation groans for in pain, like a woman in transitional labor: the revelation of the children of God. And Eden shall bloom again. And every knee will bow together, Christian, Moslem, Jew, and Wiccan, conservative redneck and liberal snowflake. Death and jihad shall be no more, and all laws will cease except the law of love.

Yes, that is universal, and yes, that is very urgent, life or death. So, choose life and tend your garden while it is still today, for tomorrow is already here.