

NEXT STEP: STUDY & SHARE

READINGS

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15

The righteous shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon. (v12)

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

Mark 4:26-34

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you are the tree of life, offering shelter to all the world. Graft us into yourself & nurture our growth, that we may bear your truth & love to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Savior & Lord. Amen.

SERMON TEXT- Mark 4:26-34

²⁶[Jesus] said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep & rise night & day, & the seed would sprout & grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.” ³⁰He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up & becomes the greatest of all shrubs, & puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

LISTENING TO . . .

GOD- *Christian life is rooted in the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*

1. Compare & contrast the Ezekiel lesson & the Gospel. What connections make the *Ezekiel* lesson a good fit as a model or prototype for the Gospel lesson? *Hint: in Ezekiel the tree symbolizes a particular person/role & the birds likely signify other nations.*
2. St. Ambrose notes that a mustard seed is of little value until it is bruised & crushed (as in making mustard condiment). Building on #1, how is Jesus like the mustard seed? *See Luke 13:18-19*

EACH OTHER- *Sharing & growing with our brothers & sisters in Christ*

3. How does this parable fit with St. Paul’s analogy in *1 Corinthians 3:5-9*? Who has God used to plant & water what he grows in your life? How did you come to see these activities as God’s work after the fact (v27)?
4. Review the Small Catechism explanation of the Lord’s Prayer, esp. 1st-3rd petitions. Use the SC’s reasoning to interpret these parables for your own everyday life. List at least 10 examples of how the kingdom has grown in your own everyday life for the sake of your salvation. Small Catechism available <bookofconcord.org>

NEIGHBORS- *Bearing fruit for those not yet our brothers & sisters*

5. It’s been said that God answers prayer 3 ways: Yes, No, & Grow. How can your own experience of this time-limited aspect of God’s Kingdom help you encourage & support a neighbor with a shorter-term view? Think of at least 10 examples between your own life & your real-life neighbors (at home & work). *See 2 Peter 3:9*
6. Letting the birds of the air symbolize the various nations, or people groups of the world, how do you make distinctions between what’s commanded & necessary for the proclamation of God’s Law & Gospel & what’s convenient & practical for a particular culture’s time & place? For instance, how are American-style economics & democratic governance needed for missionary work? How does (or not) the Gospel expect free self-expression? *See Galatians 2:1-21; SC 10 Commandments & Table of Duties.*

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Third Sunday after Pentecost
Series: A Contrasting Kingdom

06.13.21
Rev. Jared Stillions, STS

Faith vs. Sight

We can't see over the end, but we know what awaits us.

-Notes-

KEY VERSE: The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, & would sleep & rise night & day, & the seed would sprout & grow, he does not know how. (vv26-27)

-NEXT STEPS MEMORY VERSE-

Welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. (*James 1:21*)

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