

June 13, 2021 – Third Sunday After Pentecost

Introduction to the Day

The mustard seed becomes a great shrub that shelters the birds, recalling ancient images of the tree of life. We'd expect a cedar or a sequoia, but Jesus finds the power of God better imaged in a tiny, no-account seed. It's not the way we expect divine activity to look. Yet the tree of life is here, in the cross around which we gather, the tree into which we are grafted through baptism, the true vine that nourishes us with its fruit in the cup we share.

It may not appear all that impressive, but while nobody's looking it grows with a power beyond our understanding.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the God of manna,
the God of miracles,
the God of mercy.

Amen.

Drawn to Christ and seeking God's abundance,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our provider,

help us.

It is hard to believe there is enough to share.

**We question your ways when they differ from
the ways**

of the world in which we live.

**We turn to our own understanding
rather than trusting in you.**

**We take offense at your teachings and your
ways.**

Turn us again to you.

Where else can we turn?

**Share with us the words of eternal life
and feed us for life in the world.**

Amen.

Beloved people of God:

in Jesus, the manna from heaven,
you are fed and nourished.

By Jesus, the worker of miracles,
there is always more than enough.

Through Jesus, † the bread of life,
you are shown God's mercy:

you are forgiven and loved into abundant life.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

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

Amen.

Lesson – Ezekiel 17:22-24

²²Thus says the Lord GOD:

I myself will take a sprig
from the lofty top of a cedar;

I will set it out.

I will break off a tender one
from the topmost of its young twigs;

I myself will plant it
on a high and lofty mountain.

²³On the mountain height of Israel

I will plant it,

in order that it may produce boughs and bear
fruit, and become a noble cedar.

Under it every kind of bird will live;

in the shade of its branches will nest
winged creatures of every kind.

²⁴All the trees of the field shall know
that I am the LORD.

I bring low the high tree,

I make high the low tree;

I dry up the green tree
and make the dry tree flourish.

I the LORD have spoken;

I will accomplish it.

Children's Message

Gospel – Mark 4: 26-34

²⁶[Jesus] said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground,²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and 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 and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and 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.

Message

Grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Jesus frequently speaks using imagery that the hearer of the time would understand. The people of his time would understand the mustard seed imagery easily, unless us who might find ourselves wondering, “just how large is a mustard tree?”

The hearers of his time are also likely familiar with the text we just heard from Ezekiel where God speaks of the mighty cedar tree from which much fruit will come and for many there will be shade and a branch for every bird.

The hearers expect that Jesus will compare the Kingdom of God to the power and might of the cedar, and he doesn't. And rightfully so. It has been engrained in their minds that this is how it is supposed to be. They are to bow to the powerful, and if they are good, that can one day be them.

Aren't we the same way? If we play the game of life the right way, we too will be among the cedars, the powerful, the mighty.

Have these hearers not been paying attention to what Jesus is about? Have we not been paying attention to what Jesus is about?

In true Jesus fashion he flips people's understanding of what they knew, and knew well, upside down. In doing so, Jesus empowers the powerless, or at least the ones that society thought were without power.

In comparing the Kingdom of God to seed that is scattered on the ground that sprouts and grows in ways that nobody knows, Jesus is speaking to the complexity of the Body of Christ. We've definitely had those questions of, “Is this person really a part of the Body of Christ?” The Kingdom of God is also like a seed that is carefully sown, nurtured and cared for, and sprouts to provide a home for all who may need it...even if it is the smallest of the seeds.

Now, as is the case with any time Jesus uses parables to illustrate a point, we have to ask ourselves, “who are we in this?”

Are we the scattered seed? Are we the gently sown seed? Are we the one who rises and wakes and has no clue where this plant is coming from? Perhaps we are the one who sowed the seed? Maybe we do the nurturing?

And, we also must ask who is God and which one of these “characters” is Jesus?

The beauty of it all? There isn't a wrong answer.

It is easy, sure, to say that Jesus is obviously the seed because he scatters to the unreachable places and still finds a way to grow, and as the sown and cared for seed he is placed in the ground where he must give up his life as a seed does in order for new life to spring forth.

But...

Aren't we, as the Body of Christ, sent out to do God's work in the world? Do we really believe that part of that being sent doesn't include going to the difficult places to share the good news of God's love for all people?

And...

Is it not true that if we are truly to do the work of building up the Body of Christ, that we may need to bury some of our old ways (take up our Cross) in order for new life to spring forth?

It isn't easy to hear, just as it wouldn't have been easy to hear that Kingdom of God is like a little seed, when what you're expecting to hear that it is the big tall mighty cedar.

The truth is there is work to do in building up the Body of Christ. It doesn't just happen. We are called to reach out to the places and people that have been told for generations that they can't be reached. We are told to continue to nurture the seeds that have been planted right in our midst.

So often we meet these questions of "where did this come from" with the response of "that isn't my responsibility." Jesus tells us, today, that nothing could be farther from the truth.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

A brief silence.

Holy God, you plant the seeds of faith in every nation. Enliven your church, so that the good news of your grace may root and grow throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Creator, even the trees, shrubs, and flowers delight in your goodness. From the depths of the soil to the highest mountain, bring forth new plants. Restore growth to places suffering drought. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Judge of nations, we pray for our leaders and those in power. Grant them the ability to regard those under their charge with humility, dedicating their lives in service to others. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Divine comforter, you show compassion to those in need and provide relief to those who call on you (*especially Jim Holte, Jim and Sandy Nelson, Kathy Smith, Joe Christensen, Marilee Julson, Bill Kuehn, Shirley Stark, Bob Kries, Bill and Betty Davey*). Bless all who suffer, especially people trapped in cycles of poverty and homelessness. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Sovereign God, this house of worship belongs to you. We give thanks and pray for our church musician(s) (*especially*). We dedicate to you the joyful noise that comes from this place; the cries of children, the melody of voice and instruments, and the songs from our hearts. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Eternal God, we give thanks for our ancestors in the faith who are now at home with you (*especially*). We look forward to that day when we are reunited in your new creation. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Jesus, Bread of life,
you have set this table with your very self,
and called us to the feast of plenty.

Gather what has been sown among us,
and strengthen us in this meal.

Make us to be what we receive here,
your body for the life of the world.

Amen.

Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it for all to drink saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. So often as you do this, remember me.”

Once you’ve taken the elements say, “Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord’s Prayer

Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
✠ be upon you now and forever.

Amen.

Go in peace, you are the body of Christ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Please sign up to attend in-person worship!

Join us for worship on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. in the pavilion area – bring your own picnic dinner. Or join us at 9 a.m. in the Sanctuary on Sundays or at Phoenix Park at 10 a.m. Please call DeAnne in the office to get signed up for worship in the sanctuary.

Re-Connect Opportunities

We hope you will join us for any, or all, of these Re-Connect Opportunities throughout the week!

Stop in for coffee and conversation at 9 am on Mondays

TUESDAYS be sure to stop by for Bible Study starting at 11, followed by Lunch and Laughter at noon.

Thursdays we will have the sanctuary open for prayer for 8 am to 3 pm.