

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost – June 16th, 2024

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.

Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Welcome

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.

Gathering Hymn

“Build Us Up, Lord”

#670

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.

Reading – Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15

¹It is a good thing to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, O Most High;

²**to herald your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night;**

³on the psaltery, and on the lyre,
and to the melody of the harp.

⁴**For you have made me glad by your acts, O LORD;
and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.**

¹²The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,

and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.

¹³**Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God;**

¹⁴they shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be green and succulent;

¹⁵**that they may show how upright the LORD is, my rock, in whom there is no injustice.**

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.

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Jesus speaks, all too frequently, in simile and metaphor. He speaks this in order that those to whom he is teaching and preaching just might understand.

If Jesus were to say, “the Kingdom is like really big and there is a place for everyone,” 1) it would make for very short preachings and teachings, and 2) hardly lends itself to imaginative dreaming.

I, for one, like to consider Jesus to be an imaginative dreamer. It is why we get the preachings and teachings that we get from him. I, for one, also like to think God's dream of the Kingdom, realized through Christ himself, is one that knows no bounds. That is why Jesus is how he is and preaches and teaches the way that does.

Today, for example. The Kingdom is like a mustard seed.

First. Language that His hearers can relate to. Ahh yes, the mustard seed. We know this. We've seen that plant. I know what he is talking about.

Second. It starts small but expands to unimaginable heights and widths if not tended to. Again, his audience here would know this too. Thus far, he's kept their attention.

Now, he taps into their imagination.

When tended to, when nurtured and cared for, the mustard seed grows. And it grows and it grows and it grows. It grows to the point of being the greatest and tallest of all shrubs. Such that it gives the birds of the air can take shade and make nests in it.

Jesus language here is intentionally expansive.

Jesus does not say, “such that the birds of the air that fit certain criteria can find a home in it as long as they are deemed worthy.

No. Jesus simply states, “it gives the birds of the air room to take shade and make a home.”

If there were any listeners like myself in that crowd that day the likely started thinking about how many types of birds they can name, and in doing so would quickly realize just how grand an expanse the Kingdom of Heaven is.

In fact, I googled “number of bird species in the world” and was blown away by the answer given me by the internet. “In total there are about **10,000 species** of birds described worldwide, though one estimate of the real number places it at almost twice that.” So, the number is so great, the internet doesn't actually have an answer.

That is the kingdom of heaven.

The Kingdom is like a little seed that grows in the largest of shrubs so great that an unknown number of birds can make a home in it.

We have been challenged of late to consider the home that we offer as a church. We have been pushed and nudged and urged to reconsider the bounds we might find ourselves placing on the embrace of God's grace. Jesus here again reminds us it is unimaginable. And, in doing so, calls us to something new.

As a church, as a gathered body both within and far beyond these walls, is so often focused on who can be within these branches. But Jesus, in his preaching and teaching reminds us that the Kingdom itself is enough to hold an unknown, unmeasured, and unimaginable swath of God's creation.

Jesus call is for us not to focus on that. Jesus focus for us is to focus on that littlest of seeds. Jesus call is for us to think about how it is that we tend to the nurturing of the Body of Christ that we are called to care for. Because, dear church, when that nurturing can care takes place, it grows. And it grows and it grows and it grows.

And it grows to the point that all of God's creation is able to find their home in its branches. Just as each of us alike have found a home, we too are called to encourage others that they, too, have a home in God's Kingdom.

That is why Jesus talks the way that he talks. To encourage us to open up our understanding of the way that we think it is and ought to be, and explore the vast expanse of God's imaginative dream for the Kingdom and its inhabitants.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Hymn of the Day

“For the Fruit of All Creation”

#679

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

We come before the triune God to pray for our communities, ourselves, and our world.

A brief silence.

Nourish your faithful people through gifts of word and worship. Guide the church in listening to and interpreting your message of grace for this time and place in history. In your wisdom, lead us in expanding the reach of your love. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Nature sings your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night. Sustain the holy rhythms of creation: days and seasons, hibernation and activity, phases of the moon and tides of the sea. Let these patterns assure us of your constancy. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

You raise the lowly and humble those in high regard. Raise up all who are victims of marginalization, discrimination, and hate. As we anticipate Juneteenth, banish white supremacy and bigotry from the hearts of your people and remove the inclination toward anger and violence. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Tend to all who journey by faith and who wait with patience for the fulfillment of your healing promises (*We pray especially for Matt, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee.*). Grant perseverance to people doing physical and occupational therapy, people living with mobility concerns, and people facing chronic pain. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

As you have loved us, so let us love one another. Empower fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, adoptive fathers, and chosen fathers to embody this gift of love for their children. Where these relationships are strained or broken, bring your comfort and peace. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

With gratitude, we remember (*the Emanuel Nine martyrs and all*) the saints who are now at home with you. Plant seeds of their wisdom and witness in our hearts, that we grow in faith until we join them in your heavenly dwelling. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Receive our prayers, O God, and come quickly to our aid, through the power of the Spirit and the love of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

**Peace
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

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Hymns #471 & #483

Lord's Prayer

Christ has set the table with more than enough for all.
Come!

Post Communion Prayer

Jesus, Bread of life,
we have received from your table
more than we could ever ask.
As you have nourished us in this meal,
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.
In your name we pray.

Amen.

Blessing

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

Amen.

Sending Hymn

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”

#547

Sending

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ!

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.

And all of Good Shepherd said,

“AMEN”

Your Generosity in Action:



The Youth Room is taking shape! Last month's higher expenses? They're because of YOUR generosity and having the funds to cover the various expenses for this project!

THANK YOU!!

Monthly Financials to date:	Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Difference
	\$10,489	\$2,322	\$8,167
	2023: \$24,886	2023: \$25,439	Checkbook Available thru May \$17,679

**NO CHILD
IN SCHOOL
WITHOUT
NEW
SNEAKERS**



Help us fill Shepherd's Closet with sneakers for their Aug. 7 Give-Away.



Children's sizes 10-13
Girls/Women and Boys/Men size 1-8



SAVER'S FUNDRAISER JUNE 20 DROP ITEMS OFF MARKED "SAVERS"

Thank you for your support as we split the funds with
Capital Campaign and CV St. Ministry.

Bring your items to church by Wednesday, June 20!



Stand In The Light Memory Choir
Where Words Fail, Music Speaks



Cathy Reitz, *Artistic/ Musical Director*
Anne Kubiawicz, *Accompanist*

SUMMER SINGS

People in the early to mid-stages of memory loss, their care partners, and singing volunteers come together to share their love of music!

No musical experience is necessary to participate.

Thursdays, 9:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
July 11, 18, 25, 2024

July 11 – Music of The Beatles
July 18 – Folk Music
July 25 – Music of the 60s & 70s

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
outdoor pavilion – bring your own chair
1120 Cedar Street, Eau Claire

These sessions will be hybrid with the ability to attend in person or virtually via ZOOM. Please let us know if you need assistance getting set up on ZOOM.

For more information contact 715-210-4165
or standinthelightchoir@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/sitlchoir www.instagram.com/sitlchoir/
www.standinthelightmemorychoir.org

