

4th Sunday after Pentecost  
Sunday, June 16, 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.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

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.**

### **FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13**

A reading from 1 Samuel.

*Saul, anointed by the prophet Samuel as the first king of Israel, displeases the LORD. The LORD therefore sends Samuel to Bethlehem, where he anoints David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, to succeed Saul as king.*

### **PSALM: Psalm 20**

The LORD gives victory to the anointed one. (*Ps. 20:6*)

### **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 [11-13] 14-17**

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

*Paul encourages believers to live by faith and not by sight. We do not consider Jesus from a human perspective but through the eyes of faith, believing he died for all and was raised. All who are in Christ are now in God's new creation.*

### **GOSPEL: Mark 4:26-34**

*Jesus frequently uses parables to teach ordinary people as they are able to hear and understand. Images of sowing and growing show the vitality of God's kingdom.*

### **GOSPEL MESSAGE - God Gives the Growth**

In the life of faith, we often look at ourselves and wonder if we're really growing at all. The temptation to examine ourselves and despair over our flaws (or perhaps to look at others and judge their weaknesses) is ever-present. For us as Christians, the call to repentance is critical; we are to be aware of our shortcomings, confess them, and receive God's forgiveness. But we shouldn't be too hard on ourselves either.

In the gospel reading today, Jesus uses two farming or gardening analogies to portray the kingdom of God. In the first he describes the entire process—from planting, through the various growth phases, and finally to the harvest. In the second he speaks of the tiny mustard seed which, over time, grows so large that it provides shelter for other creatures.

This is the kingdom of God as a whole, and also the individual's life of faith. The seeds of faith are planted in holy baptism. Over time, God as gardener nurtures us through worship, prayer, holy communion, the practice of confession and absolution, and fellowship with other believers, such that we grow in faith toward God and love toward our neighbors. You, who started out as the tiniest of seeds or the greatest of sinners or were carelessly scattered by others, are gently tended by Jesus, the Master Gardener. You are brought into the kingdom of God so you can grow and thrive and become life-giving for others.

You may "not know how" this has happened; you may not notice it in yourself, or even in other people sometimes. But God gives the growth, and what God sets in motion will come to fruition. That we are promised. So be gentle with yourself and with others. Trust the Lord and be patient. You are being loved and nurtured and cared for, even at this very moment.

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

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. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Tend to all who journey by faith and who wait with patience for the fulfillment of your healing promises *especially* Sandra Gagnon, Karen Weigold, Keith Weckwerth, Shirley Glickman, Marilyn Schneider, Denita Wolfgram, Stephanie Yourth, Christopher Yourth, Linda Boland, Glenda Panke, Debbie Thom, Donna L Hoffman, Walter Hobden, Harold Yourth and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. In this moment of silence we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts those who need your healing touch. 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 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.**

**BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

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