

Home Service for June 16, 2024

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Let us start with a Father's Day Prayer.

*Loving Father,*

*This day we thank you for all those men who have loved us and sheltered us, challenged and inspired us. We thank you for the men who gave us life. We thank you for each man who played with us and struggled with us, who helped us find our calling in life and showed us how to be people of both strength and gentleness. Thank you, God, for the men who taught us your will and your Word. Thank you for the fatherly love that did not laugh at our dreams or brush off our ideals. Thank you for the men who gave us their time and attention, and so helped us become secure in our own self-worth. Thank you for the men in our lives who have prayed and watched over us, kept our secrets, baited our hooks, assembled our bicycles, rescued our pets and banished the monsters from beneath our beds.*

*Help us who are their daughters and sons, whether by blood or by affection, honor and respect the men whose love has made us strong. Help us honor our fathers for doing the best they could, even if sometimes we wish they had done differently.*

*Grant to those men among us who are now raising children an extra measure of wisdom that they may know how to guide young feet through an increasingly turbulent world. Give to them that strength that knows how to be tough as well as tender, demanding as well as forgiving. In the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Call to Worship:

We come to hear God's call. Life is a mystery. We are surprised by what we hear. We walk by faith. We are invited to be part of God's new creation. Life is a mystery. We walk by faith.

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, we humble our hearts before you in thanksgiving and awe. For by your mercy, we find ourselves at home in the branches of your family tree. We discover ourselves to be a people with a love that never fails. We find ourselves within your grand love story for all time and all creation. Whom can we thank, but you, for such great mercy? Bring your kingdom into our midst as we worship you this day. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, you do not see as mortals see; for you look not at outward appearances but rather on the heart. We long to be found worthy when you look upon our hearts. We yearn to forsake our petty grievances and our unkind thoughts. We wish we could shuck our selfish motivations and our deceptions. God, please help us be the best versions of ourselves. It's painful to admit the harm we do to one another. Create in our hearts a burning desire to please you. Grant us the courage to see our hearts as you see them, and give us the wisdom to trust your love. For you seek to transform us into your new creations. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

*May those who desire to please Christ, find the desires of their hearts. In Christ, we are a new creation. Everything old has passed away. Everything has become new! Glory to God!  
Amen.*

Read Psalm 72

Endow the king with your justice, O God,  
the royal son with your righteousness.

<sup>2</sup> May he judge your people in righteousness,  
your afflicted ones with justice.

<sup>3</sup> May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,  
the hills the fruit of righteousness.

<sup>4</sup> May he defend the afflicted among the people  
and save the children of the needy;  
may he crush the oppressor.

<sup>5</sup> May he endure<sup>[a]</sup> as long as the sun,  
as long as the moon, through all generations.

<sup>6</sup> May he be like rain falling on a mown field,  
like showers watering the earth.

<sup>7</sup> In his days may the righteous flourish  
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

<sup>8</sup> May he rule from sea to sea  
and from the River<sup>[b]</sup> to the ends of the earth.

<sup>9</sup> May the desert tribes bow before him  
and his enemies lick the dust.

<sup>10</sup> May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores

bring tribute to him.  
May the kings of Sheba and Seba  
present him gifts.  
11 May all kings bow down to him  
and all nations serve him.  
12 For he will deliver the needy who cry out,  
the afflicted who have no one to help.  
13 He will take pity on the weak and the needy  
and save the needy from death.  
14 He will rescue them from oppression and violence,  
for precious is their blood in his sight.  
15 Long may he live!  
May gold from Sheba be given him.  
May people ever pray for him  
and bless him all day long.  
16 May grain abound throughout the land;  
on the tops of the hills may it sway.  
May the crops flourish like Lebanon  
and thrive<sup>[c]</sup> like the grass of the field.  
17 May his name endure forever;  
may it continue as long as the sun.  
Then all nations will be blessed through him,<sup>[d]</sup>  
and they will call him blessed.  
18 Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,  
who alone does marvelous deeds.  
19 Praise be to his glorious name forever;  
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.  
Amen and Amen.  
20 This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

### Prayers of the People:

*Lord of wind and water, of calmness and peace, be with us this day. Calm our fears as we face uncertain futures. Help us to relinquish control and to place our trust totally in you. Remind us to continue to faithfully work for good, with gratitude for the many blessings you have poured upon us. When the waves and torrents threaten us, let us again to turn to you, remembering your saving mercies and love. Give us courage to become disciples who can calm the seas of doubt and anger, bringing hope and peace. As we have brought before you situations that require help and healing mercies, remind us again that you are with each person*

*and situation, offering your love and mercy. We thank you for the many ways in which you have healed us. For all the goodness you have poured on us, we offer prayers of gratitude and love, as we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.*

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Old Testament Lesson: 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13

<sup>34</sup> Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. <sup>35</sup> Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

**16** The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

<sup>2</sup> But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

The LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'" <sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."

<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

<sup>5</sup> Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.

Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." <sup>9</sup> Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the LORD chosen this one." <sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his

sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”<sup>11</sup> So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

<sup>12</sup> So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

<sup>13</sup> So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Corinthians 5:6-17

<sup>6</sup> Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we live by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

<sup>11</sup> Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. <sup>12</sup> We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. <sup>13</sup> If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:<sup>[a]</sup> The old has gone, the new is here!

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 4:26-34

He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup> With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

## Message

Today’s Gospel provides two short parables. These parable stories are about seeds, but the parables themselves are kingdom parables. They are about the kingdom of God. Since each start with the words, “The kingdom of God is like . . .” I want to share the definition of a parable which is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In the first parable, the farmer scatters his seed into the field. He lives his daily life, going about his other chores. And while he tends his garden and works in the garden, there is nothing he can do to make it grow. If a farmer was asked, “How does the seed grow?” The farmer would have to reply, “Well, I don’t know. It just does. It’s a seed and that’s what seeds do.”

That is what Jesus says about the farmer in the parable and about the seed. The farmer goes about his business. He knows what to do with the seed. But he does not know what makes it grow. Why does one seed grow and another seed does not? But it does what it is supposed to do, and it does it by itself, meaning it does it automatically. And it does it over time. First there is a blade, then the ears appear on the stalk. Then it tassels, and the full corn, the kernels fill out in those ears. If you were on our farm, you have to hope that you grab it before the raccoons did. And that is what the farmer does. When the crop is ready, the farmer goes out and harvests it.

In the first parable is really about Christ. Christ is the seed. He is planted into the ground. By coming to earth, and in His burial. The parable reads, “when the grain is ripe.” The underlying words are “when the fruit presents itself.” Christ is the true vine. And He voluntarily presented Himself as a sacrifice. And in the fullness of time, the Father sent the sickle, cutting Him off. Buried in the tomb, into the ground, Christ rose again, He is the first fruit of the resurrection. First the blade. And how did this all happen? We do not know. We only know what happened. We do not understand how. We only know that it is true and that it happened. And that from his death, He gives us life.

The power of the word of God is just like the mysterious, powerful working of the seed sown into the ground. No one can really explain how a small seed is able to break through the hard earth and grow and flourish. Plants are hard to control once they take root. The battle against the weeds in a garden is proof of the power of the seed. God's divine word is the point of comparison that Jesus wants us to remember concerning his kingdom. At times we may underestimate the power of the word of God. We might even tend to not give God's word the credit that it deserves.

Consider what God's powerful word has done in your life. God's word has been planted in our sin-darkened hearts of stone. That word of God has burst forth breaking the hardness and coldness of sin so that we now have hearts of flesh. No longer do we live in the dark but walk in the light of the love of God. All of this happens because of God's grace. The word of God was sown in our hearts; freely. And now, our lives are changed. Remember 1 PETER 1:23: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." God's kingdom work is a matter of faith, faith that God's word is working. In the midst of all of this uncertainty and false hope you and I and every believer have the hope that is never disappointing. The word of God is alive and well in our lives and we celebrate God's grace.

The second parable is about the Church. And so, as we are members of the church, and we are branches of the vine, the parable is also about us. How is it that we grow in Christ? We don't know. All we know is that God has given us His Word. Jesus now uses another earthly comparison to understand his heavenly kingdom. He describes the mustard seed as a very small seed planted in the garden. One might think that a small seed would produce a small plant or an unimportant plant. But they would be wrong for Jesus tells how that plant now provides shelter for the birds of the air. Did you know that in Israel the mustard plant could reach 10 to 15 feet high that is large results from a humble seed.

God's church is growing. Not everyone would agree with the statement. Remember God is concern with his church growing in the hearts of believers. External numbers are of a minor concern in God's grand plans for his kingdom. The beginning of the Christian church started with twelve apostles and today includes countless millions. We complain if only I could speak better, I would invite more to church. Remember God answered all the same excuses of Moses. Do not look to yourself to make earthly excuses. For Matthew 6:33 states: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." We do not always seek first God's kingdom. In our selfish, self-help,

arrogant society we have picked up some bad habits. All too often we think that the success or failure of God's church depends on us. The early church in Corinth faced many difficult problems. The church was fractured because different groups followed different leaders at different times. God through the words of Paul reminded them as he reminds us today: "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. To God be the glory. It is God and God alone who gives the increase.

We may not always see outward growth in the Christian church. We may even feel that our church or Christianity in general seems to be losing ground. This is not the case. The Lord has promised that the gates of hell cannot overcome his church. We need to remember that God's church is growing. God's church grows whenever we hear God's word. God's church grows whenever we read God's word. God's church grows whenever we study God's word. This kind of growth has nothing at all to do with number of members because it is the growth of a Christian's faith in his or her own heart. This is growth that happens because of and solely by the powerful word of God. Christian humility, which is despised by the world, will bring down the pride and arrogance of the world. God's kingdom work is a matter of faith. God's word is the working just as certain as that seed that is planted pushes it way through the ground. God's church is growing just as certain as the small mustard seed turns into a great plant. We cannot always see the numbers but God knows his members. Amen.

Benediction:

*May the dance of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—bless you and surround you this day and every day, saving you into a life of love and empowering you to witness to God's salvific work as we build the kingdom of God wherever we go. Amen.*