

Season after PENTECOST

Prayer

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Collect of the Day

Blessed Lord, since You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 1
(antiphon v. 6)
Ezekiel 17:22-24
2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (11-17)
Mark 4:26-34

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 500
Other Hymns – 577 (OT, G), 586
(OT, G), 704 (E), 652 (G), 921,
923

O Most High, we give thanks to You that You have planted Your Holy Word among us. Give healthy growth to Your Church, that she may weather the stormy--winds of this world steadfast in Christ, ever bearing the fruits of love and singing praises to Your name. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, Your Holy Spirit plants Your Word and causes it to sprout and grow as it pleases You. Bless the preaching and teaching of Your Word, that Your kingdom may be extended, and give us thankful hearts to marvel at Your work. Send faithful labourers into Your fields to scatter Your seed here and abroad, that in due time a harvest may be reaped for Your glory. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

O Lord, the great I AM, what You have spoken You will surely do. We implore You, for the sake of Christ and Your many precious promises, to bless and defend our homes, to make the efforts of parents fruitful in the teaching of their children, and to preserve them in the saving faith of Jesus. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Eternal Lord, Ruler of all, graciously regard those who have been set in positions of authority among us [especially _____]. Guide them by Your Spirit to be high in purpose, wise in counsel, firm in good resolution and unwavering in duty, that under them we may be governed quietly and peaceably. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are bold to ask for all things because You have given us Your Spirit as a guarantee. Hear us as we intercede in Jesus' name for those in every need [especially _____]. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Holy Father, from Israel You have taken a tender sprig, Your chosen Messiah, Jesus, and planted Him on the mountain for our salvation. By His death on a tree, You have reversed the curse of sin and brought life again to dry, dusty souls. Do not let us despise Your Christ, His humility or His suffering, but bring us with all Your Christians into the shade of His eternal rest; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Season after **PENTECOST SERMON**

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Proper 6) **June 13, 2021**

Sermon Text: Mark 4:26-34

'The Lord's Word Grows'

The world around us needs God's gift of forgiveness and mercy more than ever! But how do we spread the good news of sins forgiven to a world that really doesn't want to hear it?

On the day our Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, he told the disciples and his Church: "While you are going, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Wherever we go as Christians, no matter what we find ourselves doing in life, we will bring the truth of Jesus Christ with us. Jesus says to us that we need to share it! We should be prepared to give an answer to those around us as to the reason for our hope of eternal life. Jesus has forgiven all our sins, but how do we share that good news? It can be more than a little terrifying to do that. Do we have to put ourselves out on a limb to tell those we love about Jesus?

Listen to that very special last line our Lord Jesus gave us: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This is such an important truth for us to hold onto – we are not alone as we go out into the world! No matter where we go, no matter what we find ourselves doing in life, Jesus goes with us!

We are Christ's Church, members of his precious body of believers. We have been baptized. We have all the blessings our Lord Jesus promised his Church. We have his Word, and alongside that precious Word, we have the guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit throughout our lives! And with the help of the Holy Spirit guiding

and comforting us along life's way, we will be enabled and empowered to share the Good News of Jesus' forgiveness and mercy wherever we go in life!

In our text for today, our Lord Jesus gives us two parables about the coming Kingdom of God. And both of them focus our eyes on the precious truth that Christ is with us! It is God's Word which is the seed that grows Christ's Church, and that this Word is ready to grow in the hearts of those who hear it by the power and help of the Holy Spirit.

In the first parable, the sower sows the seed and lets it do its thing. Now, anyone who has planted seeds knows how this goes. You prepare the soil and you plant the seed, but once the seed is planted what do you do? It needs water. You can water it, unless like in our parable you've planted an entire field and that becomes a little bit harder to do. With a whole field, you really want to let the Lord water it with his rains from the heavens. When the rains come, guess what? The seed grows! You and I cannot do anything to make it grow faster or better. We can't take a bullhorn out there and order it to shoot up faster. That seed just does what the Lord created it to do!

And so it is with God's Word. We are asked to faithfully plant that Word of God. That means to share the truth that Jesus Christ has died to forgive us all our sins. We are not to worry about how better to say 'Jesus loves you.' Just speak that Good News when the moment arises! God will make his seed grow once we've spread it about!

But temptations arise in us, especially if that Word isn't working fast enough for our liking, or growing the way we want it to grow! So we want to do more with this seed . . . more tilling, more weeding, more something. Because we are impatient we will want to hurry the process up. We want to maximize the yield if only we could use more attractive seed. And if we were 'pickier' with the types of soil in which we plant the seed . . . well, perhaps we could make this kingdom grow faster! If only...

Listen once again, however, to what our Lord says: "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself."

No, you and I cannot make the seed grow. As helpless as we are to make a seed grow in a jar on the window ledge; so, too, are we helpless to make the Word of God grow in the heart of another human being. We are not called to worry about

how the Word grows faith; instead, we are to faithfully plant the seed as Jesus told us. We need to remain faithful by speaking the words Christ has told us to speak, and then pray to God to provide the growth.

Growth is the Holy Spirit's job! So we confess in Luther's Small Catechism in the Third Article of the Creed: "The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth." And all this happens when preachers and teachers, moms and dads, friends and family simply and faithfully speak the Word of God as Jesus gave it to us!

Our task in Christ's Church is to remain faithful to the Great Commission – to baptize, teach, and hold fast the truth of God's Word. And guess what will happen when we do that? Jesus will be with us in that Word, just as he promised: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

But our sinful impatience wears thin. The Word of God seems so old hat. There is nothing flashy about it. We worry there is no real holding power for kids these days competing against the internet, movies, and video games. How can we make the seed, the Word of God, more attractive to other people?

To this concern Jesus gives us the next parable: "The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest [most insignificant] of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the larger [and more significant] than all the garden plants."

Now, this truth of Jesus may seem 'old hat' to us who gather together week after week and year after year. And Satan wants us to become bored with our Lord's truths, to think of Jesus as no more than a mere mustard seed – 'Oh, we've heard the story! We know how it ends. Jesus died for my sins, isn't that great? Sure, but isn't there anything more?'

But what, however, we think of as plain and common, is truly a powerful and lively bomb-shell waiting to explode into life in the heart of those who need to hear the good news! The truth of God's Word, after all, has the power to give life to dead things. Jesus' victory over death will turn our tears of sorrow into eternal joy at the promise of a resurrection just like his! And when poor sinners finally see their sin-filled shame for what it is, and then hear that Jesus Christ has taken it all away so that only God's glory shines through . . . well, lives are truly changed! God's Holy Word is the only thing that can meet the most dire need of all human-kind – the full forgiveness of all our sins unto life everlasting!

And if the Word of God isn't flashy to us, its only because it doesn't flatter us in our sinfulness. God's pure Word tells us the way it is. It shows us our sins, and doesn't let us take any pride in them at all. But that Word of God also shows us Jesus in all his splendid glory, his life-restoring, sin-forgiving glory! Jesus gives us real life in his Word by forgiving all our sins, and that Word grows mightily and powerfully into the life eternal he came to bring us!

This is the powerful seed which Jesus has given to us, to his Church, to scatter and plant wherever we can while we go about our lives. It is a powerful seed, and it will do what our Lord Jesus has sent it out to do – grow! May this gracious seed continue to grow within our hearts and minds so that when the opportunities arise, the Holy Spirit may guide us to share this blessed seed with everyone we can!

In the name of Jesus. Amen.