

Worship Resources - Seedy - https://youtu.be/su0l_hYq9gs

Pentecost 3, Year B,

13^h June, 2021

Ezekiel 17:22-24 CEV / Mark 4:26-34 CEV

Prelude *With Happy Voices Singing*

By George Vause, Rev William George Tarrant, played by Annie Center,
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<https://youtu.be/kDR2IlftyIk>

Call to Worship

Called to be branches in Christ's body, **we yearn to be connected to the vine.**

Called to be mustard bushes offering shade to God's creatures,

we search for places to plant the seeds of faith.

Called to be growing with God in the midst of this world's painful questions,

we seek God's nurturing presence.

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

As we gather today, let's reflect on how we reach out to others and impact the world around us, as we share the good news in whatever way we can. As we listen to the following hymn, let's reflect on how we season the lives of those we encounter.

Reflection Video *You Are Salt for the Earth*

music by Marty Haugen, played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/EjEBOMMPWQ0>

Invocation

God of small seeds and mighty plants, you take our meager lives and with your love cause them to produce acts of loving kindness for you in this world. You hear our cries and find us when we are lost and wandering in fear. You bring us home with you so that we may be made whole, rejoicing in your goodness. Help us to joyfully serve you all our days, knowing that you are always watching over us. Prepare our hearts to receive your word and our spirits to respond in eagerness to serve you. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.

In our prophetic reading today, we hear of how God causes the smallest twigs to grow into the greatest cedars. As we listen to these words from Ezekiel, let's reflect on what seeds we plant, and how God has caused them to grow.

Word of the Prophet

Ezekiel 17:22-24 CEV

Someday, I, the Lord, will cut a tender twig from the top of a cedar tree, then plant it on the peak of Israel's tallest mountain, where it will grow strong branches and produce large fruit.

All kinds of birds will find shelter under the tree, and they will rest in the shade of its branches.

Every tree in the forest will know that I, the Lord, can bring down tall trees and help short ones grow. I dry up green trees and make dry ones green. I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will keep my word.

Scripture Video Ezekiel 17:22-24 *The Sign Of The Cedar*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/71K8pzzBHdo>

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

This morning, let's take joy in Susanna Thill's successful recovery after finally being diagnosed with several infections. May she continue to strengthen and recover from her previous surgery.

Let's also continue to keep George DeBon and family in prayer as he adjusts to his new living situation and they continue to grieve the loss of their beloved Betty.

We also give thanks for our community reaching it's 70% vaccination goal, and continue to pray for those who struggle with the effects of the pandemic.

We also lift prayers for Bill and Sylvia Hershberger for safe and uneventful travels back East this week.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

God, you insert yourself into the affairs of humankind through Jesus, the Messiah, because no earthly leaders are able to redeem the world you love so deeply. You have spoken. You will accomplish it.

Heavenly Father, even as you planted the majestic cedar tree and made it tall, so you also have brought us forth to bear fruit, in every age—even in old age.

Jesus, help us look at you and others with the spiritual eyes of faith, knowing that we are your new creation. Even as you died and rose for us, urge us to live and care for others.

You kin-dom, God, is a seed-planting kin-dom. Help the kernel of life in every shell of every single body gathered here for worship, split and sprout like seed in good soil, always looking forward to your day of harvest.

Holy Spirit, nations and leaders rise and fall like trees in a storm. In this age give us the wisdom to depend upon God's holy promises and commands, as our primary guides in life.

Help us minister to those who need their health restored, their hope invigorated, their love rekindled. Bring us a joy greater than happiness, a love beyond imagination, and may our last illness bring us to your throne of grace. Hear us as we pray for one another.

Loving God, you hear our prayers: You live among us.

The love of God has won. The new life has begun. **Amen.**

In our gospel lesson this morning, we hear Jesus' parable about the mustard seed and how such a small seed can provide so much for so many. As we listen to these words from Mark, let's reflect on how we plant seeds of hope and light, and how they might grow to help others.

Gospel Lesson Mark 4:26-34 CEV

Again Jesus said: God's kingdom is like what happens when a farmer scatters seed in a field.

The farmer sleeps at night and is up and around during the day. Yet the seeds keep sprouting and growing, and he doesn't understand how.

It is the ground that makes the seeds sprout and grow into plants that produce grain.

Then when harvest season comes and the grain is ripe, the farmer cuts it with a sickle.^[a]

Finally, Jesus said: What is God's kingdom like? What story can I use to explain it?

It is like what happens when a mustard seed is planted in the ground. It is the smallest seed in all the world.

But once it is planted, it grows larger than any garden plant. It even puts out branches that are big enough for birds to nest in its shade.

Jesus used many other stories when he spoke to the people, and he taught them as much as they could understand.

He did not tell them anything without using stories. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them

Scripture Video **Mark 4:26-34**
The Parable Of The Mustard Seed

Lectionary bible reading

https://youtu.be/eh4WCQYZg_M

Message - Seedy

With the warmer, sunnier weather, it's amazing how much greener our little corner of the world has become in the last couple of months. A few weeks ago, I marveled at how beautiful our church building is when everything seems to bloom at once. Now most of the blooming is over, and the plants are growing at full speed.

I was reminded of a work party we had to do some pruning the first summer I was here. I hacked and hacked at the wisteria and the many other vines that had taken over the fence along our driveway. Despite my impressive hack job, it was soon grown over just as bad the next year. I say "hack job" because if you give me any kind of trimming implement, you need to understand I have no conception of a "light trim." I prune for maximum efficiency. Yet, how those vines grow is indicative of many plants in the world.

We plant seeds at some point, water them, maybe fertilize them, and eventually green shoots generally burst forth and get bigger and thicker over time. Some plants, like the vines on our fence, especially ones like morning glories, will go crazy and grow and grow like wildfire. Others may grow much more slowly, taking their time to reach their full potential. Some, like pines and cedars, can grow very tall and thick, creating their own canopy. Others only grow so high and bush out like shrubs and hedges. It's amazing when you think of all the different plants and growth patterns in the created world around us. While we may plant the initial seed, eventually many of those plants we start then go to flower and spread their own seeds, self-producing many more. It can be amazing what can come from such a tiny thing as a seed.

In our gospel story today, Jesus tells two parables about seeds and how they grow. In the first he stresses that while we may plant and care for the seed, how that seed grows is really out of our hands. We can do our best to make sure it's planted in the right soil, and has all the nutrients and conditions it needs to grow, but the rest is up to God.

Some time ago "Reader's Digest" told the story about a company who mailed out some special advertising business post cards with a mustard seed glued to it with the following caption that went something like this: "If you have faith as small as this mustard seed in our (product), you are guaranteed to get excellent results and be totally satisfied." -- *Signed, The Management*. A few months later one recipient of this promotional piece wrote back to the company and said, "You will be very interested to know that I planted the mustard seed you sent on your advertising card and it has grown into a very healthy bush producing wonderful tomatoes!" An amusing example of just how little we can know what the seeds we plant will produce.

That is the very point Jesus is making in this first parable. This parable is in the middle of several in which Jesus uses this theme of planting seeds. The first parable in the chapter discusses God spreading seeds on different types of soil representing different kinds of people, and illustrates the right mindset we need to have to live into the kin-dom he offers. He then tells us that our light needs to shine like one on a hill, not one under a bushel basket. That leads us to this first parable in today's reading.

This is how our light shines. We plant seeds. We get involved with the people and the world around us. That may look like evangelism, introducing others to what this kin-dom of God looks like, how this kin-dom life should be lead. Often, planting seeds may look like being the light of Christ in the darkness of the world around us. It could be something as simple as saying "Good Morning!" to someone we pass on the street. It could be giving a dollar to the homeless person at QFC and wishing them a "blessed day." It can also be more substantial efforts, like our Thanksgiving Baskets.

The point Jesus is making is that we may never know how our seeds develop and we shouldn't worry about whether we meet with immediate success. We're simply called to keep spreading the seeds, and nurturing them the best we can, and God handles the growth, in the proper way and time. Too often though, we look at the world in which we live, and feel we can't possibly make a real difference. The problems are too big for any one person or one tiny church.

That's where our second parable today comes in. Jesus tells us that one of the smallest seeds, the mustard seed, can create one of the largest shrubs, one that can give shelter to birds and animals of many kinds. Mark's version of this parable differs from the same story in Matthew and Luke. In both of those versions, the mustard seed grows into a full tree, while in Mark, it stays just a substantial shrub.

From a biblical scholar point of view, I tend to favor Mark's version. Mark is the oldest of the Gospels, and I think it is a little closer to reality than the other two. Matthew and Luke's versions seem to want to make a stronger connection to our Ezekiel text this morning,

where Israel's redemption is imagined as a grand, towering cedar. The kingdom that Jesus ushers in is one of service, of humility, not the grand kingdom that Judaism expected to immediately occur with the coming of the messiah. Mark's parable makes this lesson more approachable for us as individuals. We're not called to plant seeds that produce mighty cedars, though that may occasionally happen. What we are called to do is continue to plant our own small seeds, which with God's help grow into these large sheltering bushes, that provide safety and security for little groups of God's beloved. Each bush is not a towering accomplishment, but if we plant fields of seeds that grow into bushes, put together they can provide for multitudes.

There's the story of a gardener who, once prompted by curiosity, counted the seed pods on a medium-sized mustard plant. There were 85. The average number of seeds in each pod was eight. Since two crops in a given year could be matured, the gardener figured that it was possible in the interim between February and mid-October to produce a yield of 462,000 seeds, all from one original plant. Many other species of plants far exceed that increase. If the seed of a mustard plant can produce that kind of result, IMAGINE what the Spiritual seed that God gives us can do! While our seeds may seem small, the growth that God can give them can be limitless. And while these images of seeds and bushes and growth are lovely metaphors, how does this translate into real life?

What does it really look like to "plant seeds?" Well, our first clues are in the earlier verses in this chapter I alluded to earlier. We need to be the receptive, fertile ground that germinates the seeds that God through the Spirit sows in us. We need to keep ourselves focused and open to the Spirit's leading, not the leading that we get from the powers and the principalities of the world. We need to let the light of Christ shine from us, not hide it in isolation under the bushel baskets of silence and solitude we make for ourselves. We need to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. We need to be a presence outside our own comfort zones. We need to keep collecting food for the hungry and gifts for the less fortunate. We need to do what we can do for the youth of our community whose childhoods are much different than those we were fortunate to experience. And perhaps most important of all, we need to be voice of Jesus in this troubled world in which we live. We need to speak up against injustice, speak truth to power. We need to counter the public narrative that says our scripture and our God stand for denying food to the hungry, refusing shelter to the refugee, that our Savior supports policies that separate children from their parents, or rhetoric that makes it OK not to say Black Lives Matter.

We wonder why our pews are empty yet what "gospel" message are people hearing the most? Is it one of hate, of greed and selfishness, of intolerance and cruelty. Or is it one of love and caring, of open arms and open hearts? The spiritual landscape in our country is becoming increasingly barren. Will we choose to be God's gardeners? Will we choose to scatter and sew our mustard seeds to spiritually replant this desert land?

What seeds can you plant? How can we plant our seeds together? I pray that we can work together to find ways to make our world the lush garden, the mustard patch, it was meant to be. Amen.

Call to Serve.

Jesus' teachings give us many seeds to sow in this community and beyond. It is, however, through our offering that we can nurture these seeds so all may know the gospel's promise.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today let's think about our mission as a part of the body of Christ, and how we might better reach out to sow the seeds of the Gospel in our own communities.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [Video]

I Love to Tell the Story

by Catherine Hankey and William Fischer,
played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/NXGKpl3S-04>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the offerings brought this day be used as seeds,
planted faithfully and nurtured lovingly
so that God's way may be realized anew in this world.
Grant us the humility we need to plant and then tend your precious garden. **Amen.**

Blessing/Assurance

God continues to speak to us: in the Spirit moving as breeze through the boughs of tall trees, through the song of birds and the noisy squirrels making their homes in the branches God made for them. God continues to speak life and love to us. Know God's love. You are forgiven. Listen to the voice of God in creation: You are called to restoration. God needs you, and you are God's beloved child, made in God's image. Go and share the Good News, and work for the reign of God. Amen.

As we extinguish this candle, let's carry it's divine spark into our own lives this week, shining God's like into the lives of all we encounter. Amen.

Postlude ***Now Go Forward***

translated by Evelyn Chiu, played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/5i9FdEjtBO4>