

Pentecost #3

6-13-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor
Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“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.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Come, Ye Disconsolate”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to thy name, O Most High;
² to declare thy steadfast love in the morning,
and thy faithfulness by night,
³ to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
⁴ For thou, O Lord, hast made me glad by thy work;
at the works of thy hands I sing for joy.
¹² The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
¹³ They are planted in the house of the Lord,
they flourish in the courts of our God.
¹⁴ They still bring forth fruit in old age,
they are ever full of sap and green,
¹⁵ to show that the Lord is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.001”

Hymn of Praise: [“For the Beauty of the Earth”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O God, you are the tree of life, offering shelter to all the wrld. 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.”

1st Reading: [Ezekiel 17:22-24](#)

2nd Reading: [2 Corinthians 5:6-17](#)

The Gospel: [Mark 4:26-34](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Son of God, Eternal Savior”](#)

The Message: Vicar Karen Pugatch ([Video Link](#))

The Holy Gospel is according to Mark the 4th Chapter

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.

The Gospel of our Lord
Praise to you O Christ

Suzanne Simard comes from a long line of loggers. As a child she played in the forest understory, fascinated by the life that teemed there, intrigued by what she could not see. As an adult, trained in forestry she wondered why it was that fir tree saplings did so poorly when the birch tree saplings were weeded out from among them- shouldn't that lack of competition make the firs grow faster, make them stronger-what was going on?

Suzanne turned her attention to the soil and there she discovered what has come to be known as the wood-wide-web. There is, unseen to our human gaze which stops at the topsoil, a network of mycorrhizal fungi which link the trees in the forest. These fungi grow into the tips of tree roots and enable the individual trees to behave as a community sharing nutrients. Even alarm signals can pass from tree to tree over this network preparing the others for danger. The flow tends to be from the oldest, biggest trees to the smaller younger ones, these older trees are often called “mother trees”.

Research shows that seedlings separated from this network die at a higher rate than those that remain connected. Healthy trees share resources with those that are ailing, and trees near death share carbon with their neighbors-individuals are woven together into

community- there is a mutuality not just among individuals of the same species but across species.

It turns out that we, in our attempts to increase production, through our clear cutting and forest management do much more harm than good. Seedlings planted in clear cut forests have no access to the ancient trees that came before, so are cut off from this community and vulnerable to disease. We just can't, no matter how hard we try, improve upon the system that our creator has put in place! Something mysterious and unseen happens in the soil.

The kingdom of God is like a sleeping gardener who has scattered seed and then is blissfully unaware of the mystery taking place in the dirt. The kingdom of God is like mustard or kudzu- taking over of its own accord -nimble and quick rather than unbending like a mighty cedar. Just how the kingdom of God grows is beyond our control, influence, or understanding and will exceed our expectations! The trees of the forest are connected, their root systems entwined in knots even the most patient cannot untangle; within a tiny seed is promise and potential. Such is the kingdom of God, cloaked in mystery, capable of unimaginable growth, out of our hands.

Our first parable bids us to scatter the seed and to rest assured that the grace of God will do the rest. We don't "provoke the harvest" our responsibility is to tend to the sowing of the seed and let nature do the rest.

Nothing we do will hasten the harvest we need to find the proper soil and trust that the seed will grow. We can't manipulate the process to get to the end that we desire-that is up to God. God will get us there in God's own time-the promised harvest will surely come. This is good news, hopeful news for us and those who first heard these stories-the kingdom is here and now, already present in the everyday places of our lives and at work even if we cannot see it.

In Mark's story thus far, Jesus has performed many miracles but some of the Jewish authorities are up in arms by what he has done, he is a man marked for destruction and death, seen as possessed. His family has called him crazy, so many people want to hear him he has been driven out onto the lake to teach but much of what he has to say is confusing, making some in the crowd angry, fueling the fire already burning against him. What we will encounter as we move through Mark's narrative is that as Jesus heals and welcomes; he confronts and enrages systems of power. These actions and reactions are entwined together.

Through his stories about familiar places and things and through his interactions with outsiders, Jesus is meeting power with non-violent resistance-where the kingdoms of men seek to oppress-the kingdom of God reaches out with healing hands. Jesus is always chipping away at those foundational systems of oppression that permeate the landscape of his day-that permeate our time as well.

Jesus' parables are stories, coded messages shared with the community that followed him- coded for the protection of the listeners, like the coded messages of slaves in antebellum America. The casual listener hears of seed and weed. For those with access to Jesus, these are stories that speak of the expansive, inclusive kingdom of God. Unlike the mighty cedars of Lebanon which exude power and majesty but are inflexible and slow growing, God's kingdom is likened to a lowly fast-growing weed. This weed is uncontrollable, nimble as it spreads and

grows beckoning the birds of the air to rest in its shade. The kingdom of God isn't about earthly power rather it is about providing rest, care, and shelter for all.

In many ways the kingdom is a mystery - we can't explain or understand mystery we just need to go with it trust in the reliability of God to get it done. Our job is to scatter seed- there might not be any perceptible or immediate change we can measure. Our actions have impact outside our own context but, we need to be patient because our actions are seeds, whose growth we cannot control -the kingdom will grow because God will make it so! We must be like the sleeping gardener willing to trust that the harvest will come; willing to plant a tree whose fruit we may not taste in this world; willing to give ourselves over to the entwined community of God that develops sometimes unseen in fertile soil. The kingdom which will burst forth in shoot, leaves and seed-head ready for harvest in God's time.

Jesus called simple fishermen not warriors to be about the work of the kingdom. He enlists the patient seed scatterers, welcomes sinners and the unclean to his cause-confidant that his army of outcasts has what it takes to be about God's work in the world.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to meet the violent oppression of the powerful empires of this world with gentleness and love trusting that like kudzu there is no stopping the growth of the kingdom. We need to grow into that place of welcome and shelter for all; a community of protection not exclusion-yet ever mindful that it is God's work -our hands but God's doing.

To what will we compare the kingdom-What parable shall we use? The kingdom of God is us, simple folk who scatter seed and wonder at how it grows. The kingdom of God is like a forest deeply connected, entwined at our roots, sharing our gifts, spreading our sorrows, bearing each other's burdens, enriched through word and sacrament, deeply connected to those who have gone before us-living in hope because the kingdom is here and now not subject to our feeble manipulation but planted to flourish in the mystery and abundance of God's grace.

Anthem: [“How Great Thou Art” Mormon Tabernacle Choir](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Creator God who has created all of life whose intricacies are well beyond belief, we are in awe and wonder of your handiwork. As all of life is designed to be interrelated so may we realize and live as a vital part of your creative order. In doing this may we respect all of life and be caretakers and caregivers to every aspect of your creation. Wipe away from our lives those things which may separate us as your children from each other and the life we share with the natural world. Let your love shine forth from our lives in order that life may find joy and meaning to us and the world in which we live.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della , Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Spread, Oh Spread, Almighty Word"](#)

Announcements

Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions force us indoors. Face masks and social distancing outdoors are not required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors

Sunday June 13, 3:00 - Piano recital – All are welcome.

Sunday, June 27, 6:00-8:00 – Jerusalem Mill Outdoor Concert, Kingsville, MD Features popular Celtic Baritone, Charlie Zahn, \$15.00 Bring your own lawn chair.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithely.com/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291