

**PENTECOST:
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 6

June 14, 2009

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15

2 Corinthians 5:6-10 [11-13] 14-17

Mark 4:26-34

Sowing Seeds

Often in his teaching, Jesus compares our task of telling others about the Good News of the kingdom of God to that of sowing seeds. In this week's Gospel text, Jesus tells two parables about seeds. The first is about a farmer who sows seeds, and the second compares the kingdom to a mustard seed. What is it that Jesus would have us to learn in these lessons?

We live in a world where success is largely measured by numbers, and people are judged by the effort they put into what they are doing. We are taught to believe that success is the result of our effort and that it is all in our hands. But does that apply to God's kingdom?

In God's kingdom success is judged by our faithfulness to our calling and the increase is the work of the Holy Spirit. Results are not in our hands because salvation is the work of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

What is the role of the farmer in our text? He casts seed into the soil. And, as he does so, it is implied that God sends the sunshine and the rain (Mark 4:27, 28). The farmer does his part and goes to sleep, and somehow the seed sprouts and grows.

As farmers of the kingdom, we sow seeds of the gospel. We tell others of Jesus and witness to our faith. It's all we can do. We would like to do more, but the results are beyond our human ability. The people we witness to are dead in their sins. We are not in a position to give them life; only God can do that. We need to trust, as the farmer does, that the seeds we sow will sprout and grow.

The second parable is about the mustard seed, the smallest of seeds that, when it sprouts, grows to be the largest of the garden plants. So big in fact that birds nest in its branches.

We all want to do big things, but kingdom work is not about us; it is about God. We are only asked to sow seeds – small seeds. God takes the small seeds that we sow, and what

sprouts from them is the kingdom of God that spreads from one end of the earth to the other. The little seeds we sow will sprout by the power of the Holy Spirit into the kingdom of God that will have no end.

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. David Haberer, Pastor of Church for All Nations which reaches out to the world from the heart of New York City. Visit: www.CFAN.net to learn more about this ministry. Pastor Haberer is an ordained minister with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Serbia and Montenegro – With thanks to God for the new illustrated Children's Bible and for progress in preparing more youth titles to be published this year, and for *Four Gospels in Romani* to be launched this year, and with prayers for efforts to interest more young people in the Bible, and for the 25th Summer Universiade to be held in Belgrade in July for 12,000 international students; **Macedonia** – With prayers that more people will be reached with the Bible and with prayers for work on a new translation of the Bible in contemporary Macedonian, and with prayers for an improvement in the country's economy; **Bosnia-Herzegovina** – With thanks to God for last year's distribution of 4,000 Bibles and the churches' acceptance of the revised Saric Bible translation, and with prayers for a relaxation of religious tensions and for good cooperation with fellow Christians and with Bible Societies in Serbia and Croatia.

Activity Corner: "Family Tree Poster"

Supplies needed: Bible; poster board (or newsprint); half sheets of construction paper; leaf pattern; markers or crayons; pens or pencils; scissors; individual photos (optional).

Read together Psalm 92:12-15. Discuss how this psalm is related to the Old Testament reading from Ezekiel (17:22-24) and to the Gospel text from Mark (4:26-34). How has God been active in your family and in your faith community in terms of planting, nurturing, and giving growth?

On poster board or a sheet of newsprint, draw a tree trunk with branches (at least one branch for each member of your household). Across the top write, "We are planted in the house of the LORD." (Psalm 92:13) Invite each member of your household to trace a leaf on construction paper, write their name along with a word or phrase that describes how they plan to grow in faith throughout the coming months of the Pentecost season. Then affix each one's leaf to a branch. Use this "family tree" throughout the week during your devotions, praying for each one's desire to grow in faith. As an option, ask each one to affix their photo to a leaf to be added to the tree.

Conclude by reading together Psalm 92:1-4.