

4th Sunday after Pentecost June 17, 2018

Third Sunday after the Trinity Propers 6 (11)

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

Available on line at:

- ✦ www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
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Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **First Sunday of the month at 11 AM:** St. Philip Lutheran Church, 11315 Regalia Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104



<http://prayersofthepeople.blogspot.com/2015/06/prayers-of-people-sprouting-confidence.html>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 500 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 236

“Creator Spirit, by those aid“

"The Hymnal 1982 Companion provides the following information:

- Of all Latin Hymns, this has probably been the most familiar to Anglicans throughout the centuries. Most likely written in the ninth century, it has been in continuous use in English coronation rites since the accession of Edward II in 1307. . . . Its original use is unknown, but it has been sung at various Pentecost offices at least since the tenth century and at ordination services at least since the eleventh (Vol. Three B, pp. 502-503)." https://hymnary.org/text/creator_spirit_by_whose_aid

The three most common melodies are [MELITA \(Dykes\)](#) ("Eternal Father strong to save" named after the island on which Paul was shipwrecked), [ATTWOOD](#) and the one in LSB and TLH, [ALL EHR UND LOB](#). These melodies only make up half of those in use.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrEPahjh1zo> The prelude for hymn 500 in Lutheran Service Book is from Concordia Master Organ Works of Jan Bender, Vol. 2. Organist is Mark Peters. A posted comment: "Skip the first 1:30. Almost didn't make it that far."
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSii3ZhwNo0> Try it to this melody. Creator Spirit, By Whose Aid · OCP Session Choir Journeysongs, Third edition: Volume 13
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUhY3YQWRhM> Another melody. From Morning Service on May 31, 2009. Attr. Rhabanus Maurus (776-856) / Charles Callahan / Piano: Ruth Bechtel. Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, Washington

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Ezekiel 17:22-24; Revised Common Lectionary, (RCL), the same reading or 1 Samuel 15:34-16:3 (Next week: Isaiah 40:1-5 ; RCL, Job 38:1-11 or 1 Samuel 17:1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49)

Read the entire parable of the two eagles and a vine beginning at 17:1.

"In this text, Ezekiel gives us yet another of the Bible's many images of God: God as tree planter and tree tender.

"Even a cursory concordance search reveals that the Bible is rife with trees. In Genesis, we learn, intriguingly, that God made trees not first because of any utilitarian value, but simply because God likes trees. True, they are "good for food," but before that they are "pleasant to the sight" (Genesis 2:9). Those who trust in the Lord are "like a green olive tree" in God's house (Psalm 52:8), and the beauty and wonder of trees makes them surprisingly erotic images in the Song of Songs (2:3; 7:7-8)..."

“This excursus (which could be extended at length) reminds us that in the Bible trees evoke poetic wonder -- as they do in our text. This will remind us that our text, too, is poetry and should not be overexegeted. In the earlier part of chapter 17, Ezekiel also speaks in poetic riddles about trees, eagles, and vines (17:2-10). The reader finds the poetry intriguing, but the riddle remains baffling -- perhaps all the more so when the prophet tries to explain it! (17:10-21)...

Happily, in my opinion, the prophet doesn't try to explain this poem. Generally, to explain a poem is to kill it, and the preacher should not do that to this beautiful text -- especially since the prophet did not. We must talk about the poem, no doubt, but we want to proclaim it rather than to explain it. The preacher will want to allow the congregation to bask in the beauty and wonder of the poem, perhaps even in its uncertainty, which more easily allows a present appropriation than the convoluted historical explanation of 17:11-21...”

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1300 **Fred Gaiser** Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

²² Thus says the Lord GOD: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. ²⁴ And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

“...This is a prophecy of the Messiah to come. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom. It will start out small and insignificant, like a tender sprig. But it will grow and bear branches, and birds of every sort will make their nest in it.

So this is the background, then, when Jesus tells his little parable about the mustard seed: “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

Friends, this is a picture of the kingdom of the Christ. Jesus’ kingdom comes in a very humble way. Jesus came not as a mighty conqueror, mounted on a steed, a war horse. No, he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, a beast of burden. For Jesus came as a humble king, a man of sorrows, riding into Jerusalem to suffer and to die, to bear the burden of our sins. This is how his kingdom comes.

This is how your forgiveness and your salvation come, in humble ways. It is Jesus dying on a cross, in shame and rejection, that is actually God’s wisdom and God’s power. Christ, the Son of God, must die for your sins, in your place, in order for you to be saved. It looks like weakness and foolishness, to think that anything grand or glorious could come out of such suffering and death, but there it is. This is how the kingdom comes. The Christ rises from the dead, though. Death could not hold him. It will not hold you, either, all you who trust in him...”

- <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2015/03/a-growing-tree-sermon-on-ezekiel-1722-24-matthew-1331-32-by-pr-charles-henrickson/> Rev. Charles Henrickson currently serves at [St Matthew Lutheran Church in Bonne Terre, Missouri](#).

Psalm 1; RCL, Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15 or Psalm 20 (Psalm 85:1-6) 7-13; RCL, Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32 or Psalm 9:9-20)

Yes, we did just have this Psalm, on May 13, the seventh Sunday of Easter. Here is a reminder of what David Spurgeon had to say: "...This Psalm may be regarded as THE PREFACE PSALM, having in it a notification of the contents of the entire Book. It is the psalmists's desire to teach us the way to blessedness, and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners. This, then, is the matter of the first Psalm, which may be looked upon, in some respects, as the text upon which the whole of the Psalms make up a divine sermon..."

- <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/treasury-of-david/psalms-1-1.html>
David Spurgeon

Book One

The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

1 Blessed is the man^[a]

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

² but his delight is in the law^[b] of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

³ He is like a tree

planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

⁴ The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

- a. [Psalm 1:1](#) The singular Hebrew word for *man* (*ish*) is used here to portray a representative example of a godly person; see Preface
- b. [Psalm 1:2](#) Or *instruction*

“...Structurally, the Psalm clearly falls into two sections contrasting the righteous (verses 1-3) with the wicked (verses 4-5), followed by a summarizing coda (verse 6). A and A' are linked by the repetition of "wicked" and "sinners." B and B' are linked by the repetition of the comparative *kaph*, "like," as well as the adversative "but" (*ki im*). This leaves the stark contrast of C and C' with its dramatic "Not so, the wicked!" (verse 4a, NIV) as a central hinge or pivot, as the following schematic reveals:

Structural Analysis of Psalm One:

- A Description: the righteous (1)
- B Comparison: the righteous is like (2-3a)
- C Result: Prosperity for the righteous (3b)
- C' Result: Not so for the wicked (4a)
- B' Comparison: the wicked are like (4b)
- A' Description: the wicked (5)
- CODA** The two ways summarized (6)

Essentially, the psalm serves as an extended metaphor and explanation of the antithetical proverb expressed as a chiasm in the Coda (verse 6):

- A For Yahweh knows
- B the way of the righteous
- B' but the way of the wicked
- A' will perish..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1231 **Mark Throntveit** Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.
- Visit <https://archive.org/details/complecommenta01luth> for an interesting way to "read" Luther's comments.
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2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (11-17); RCL, Corinthians 5:6-10 (11-13), 14-17; (2 Corinthians 6:1-13; RCL, the same reading)

The Epistle (2nd Reading) will continue from 2 Corinthians through July 8.

• **2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17**

"...Rifts and gaps open up between people for all kinds of reasons. Those who once complimented now critique, those who once thought well of you could scarcely be less charitable now..."

As we have noted in a couple previous sermon starters from 2 Corinthians, Paul knew what that felt like and that can make reading 2 Corinthians a painful exercise at times. Paul had had a good experience in the city of Corinth. The church he planted was filled with people dear to his heart, and though the Corinthians were a feisty group loaded with potential problems, Paul loved them and, even after leaving Corinth, prayed for them every day. So how it must have hurt to learn that in Corinth his reputation has been shattered. After Paul's departure some nay-sayers came to town and called Paul into question. They impugned Paul's credentials, claiming he had no right to call himself an apostle. They alleged that Paul was a money-grubber and a charlatan whose motives were impure and whose so-called "gospel" was just so much hogwash and heresy.

So in this second letter to the Corinthians Paul, with grit teeth sometimes and through tears at other times, has to defend himself. At the conclusion of this fifth chapter, Paul's desire

to clear his name combines with his effort to repeat the true gospel, resulting in a sublime passage of great power. The centerpiece is reconciliation. By grace alone and because of Jesus, God has reconciled us to himself...” (continued after the reading)

Our Heavenly Dwelling

⁵ For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³ if indeed by putting it on^[a] we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. ¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³ For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.^[b] The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- a. [2 Corinthians 5:3](#) Some manuscripts *putting it off*
- b. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) Or *creature*

“Tom Long once told a story that illustrates the “already and not yet” nature of reconciliation in our lives. One time Long was asked to preach at what was billed as a special “family worship service.”

It was a great idea . . . on paper.

The notion was to hold the worship service not in the sanctuary but in the fellowship hall. There in the hall families would gather around tables and in the center of each table there would be the ingredients for making a mini-loaf of bread. The plan was to have the families make bread together and then, while the sweet aroma of baking bread filled the hall, the minister would preach. When the bread was finished, it would be brought out and used for a celebration of the Lord's Supper.

It was a great idea . . . on paper.

But it didn't work out very well. Within minutes the fellowship hall was a hazy cloud of flour dust. Soggy balls of dough bounced off Rev. Long's new suit as children hurled bits of the dough at each other. Husbands and wives began to snipe, nerves were frayed. Then the ovens didn't work right and it took forever for the bread to bake. Children whimpered, babies screamed, families were on the verge of falling apart.

But finally, and mercifully, the end of the service came. The script called for Long to pronounce the normal blessing saying, "The peace of God be with you." Too tired and irritable to ad-lib anything, Long just said it straight out, holding limp, flour-caked hands to the air and saying, "The peace of God be with you." And immediately, from the back of the trashed fellowship hall, a young child's voice piped up, "It already is."

A little child did lead them that night. Indeed, "It already is." Because once upon a time God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself."

- http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-6b-2/?type=the_lectionary_gospel Scott Hoezee

THE MARK CHALLENGE

How's chapter 9 coming along? "The Transfiguration" and "Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit" should be in your copy by now. See the last page of this lesson for another challenge.

Mark 4:26-34; RCL, the same reading (Mark 4:35-41; RCL, the same reading)

"Like the message they convey, the two parables in this part of Mark 4 are mighty small. This is no Parable of the Prodigal Son that takes up the better part of a whole chapter. Jesus manages to convey something about the smallness of the kingdom via two stories that are themselves pretty tiny. And yet, like the seeds also depicted, these small little parables pack a punch. They capture the very kingdom mystery and (apparent) weakness Jesus is highlighting.

*The kingdom is finally a mystery. It's like a farmer who tosses seed out onto a field and then walks away. He sleeps, he gets up. Days come and days go but somehow, even as the farmer is doing apparently nothing, the seeds grow. In verse 28 you read the phrase "all by itself," and in Greek that is the word *automate*, from which we get our word "automatic." Automatically, mysteriously, without any apparent outside assistance, the seeds just grow and suddenly the day arrives when you've got a whole field of wheat ready to be harvested..."*

- http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-6b-2/?type=the_lectionary_gospel Scott Hoezee

“The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 4th Chapter”

The Parable of the Seed Growing

²⁶ And he said, *“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”*

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰ And he said, *“With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”*

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it.

³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“...Mark contains few parables, but the ones that are there really count.

This passage concludes an extended string of them, beginning in Mark 3:23. Taken together, this collection of parables creates the context for experiencing Jesus’ continuing ministry as the inaugurator of the elusive yet inevitable reign (traditionally, “kingdom”) of God. In the parables Jesus divulges enough to keep us from throwing up our hands in dismay later in Mark each time we encounter a disciple’s blunder or a command to keep Jesus’ identity secret.

The seed growing on its own (Mark 4:26-29)

No other Gospel contains this parable. Probably because it’s boring. Its plot has all the suspenseful drama of an ordinary elementary-school life sciences textbook. There are no surprises. Everything proceeds according to plan. Jesus simply speaks about seeds and what they are supposed to do. They grow and produce. Moreover, they grow and produce without your help or your intricate knowledge of germination or photosynthesis or palea, thank you very much.

In other words, the reign of God will take root -- whether in the world, in imperial society, or in someone’s heart, Jesus does not specify. It will grow gradually and automatically (the New Revised Standard Version renders *automate* in Mark 4:26 as what the earth does “on its own”). It will grow perhaps so subtly that you won’t even notice, until at last it produces its intended fruit...

The mighty mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32)

Compared to the previous parable's matter-of-factness, the story of the mustard seed reads like a dense novella. At first glance, it reaffirms things people have already learned about God's reign: something very small will eventually morph into something much larger; also, something that appears obscure and insignificant will turn into something public and grand. Yet there is more: the reign of God won't just grow for the sake of looking pretty, but creatures will find that it provides them shelter and security.

Those are all important points, but they cannot capture the real energy in this parable. The parable's punch comes in at least two funny things Jesus says.

First, God's reign isn't like any ordinary seed. In some ways it resembles a *mustard* seed. This is not the kind of crop most people would sow. Where Jesus lived, mustard was prolific like a common and sturdy weed. It could pop up almost anywhere and start multiplying. Some of Jesus' listeners must have groaned or chuckled. Imagine him speaking today of thistles or ground-ivy. But *bigger*. And more useful, since mustard has a range of medicinal qualities. In any case, the reign of God apparently isn't much of a cash crop. Yet *it grows*. It is not easily eradicated. Good luck keeping it out of your well manicured garden or your farmland. Better be careful what you pray for when you say, "Your kingdom come..."

Second, Jesus describes the fully grown mustard plant (probably *brassica negra* in Galilee) as "the greatest of all shrubs."¹ At this point, some of his auditors probably snorted and blew milk out of their noses. Google *brassica negra* and judge for yourself. It can grow dense, but it is hardly magnificent. Jesus must be grinning as he speaks. He is not aiming to impart insights about the relative worth of shrubberies but to shock people into a new way of perceiving greatness.

The humor and the absurdity are part of the main point. Jesus could have likened God's reign to the cedars of Lebanon if he wanted to describe an in-breaking state of affairs that would cause people to drop everything and be impressed (see Ezekiel 17:22-24; see also Ezekiel 31:3-9; Daniel 4:10-12). Instead he describes something more ordinary, and yet also something more able to show up, to take over inch by inch, and eventually to transform a whole landscape. Fussy people might deem this uninvited plant to be too much of a good thing. Others might consider it a nuisance, but what about those who, like the birds, need a home where they can be safe? They will be happy..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3676 **Matt Skinner** Professor of New Testament' Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.



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June 24, next Sunday, is also known as the commemoration of the Nativity of St John the Baptist. The readings for that day are, Isaiah 40:1-5, Psalm 85: (1-6) 7-13, Acts 13-26 and Luke 1:57-80.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE CHALLENGE?
THE MARK CHALLENGE – LECTIONARY YEAR B 2017-18



The original challenge was to produce a handwritten copy of the book of Mark. If you haven't started yet, consider this challenge – read the entire book of Mark by 11/25/2018.

How you do it is your choice, actually doing it is also your choice.

Suggested Schedule for reading the book of Mark.

June	Chapter 1	45 verses	completed _____
	Chapter 2, 3	63 verses	completed _____
July	Chapters 4	41 verses	completed _____
	Chapter 5	43 verses	completed _____
August	Chapter 6	56 verses	completed _____
	Chapters 7, 8	75 verses	completed _____
July	Chapter 9	50 verses	completed _____
	Chapter 10	52 verses	completed _____
August	Chapter 11	33 verses	completed _____
September	Chapters 12, 13	81 verses	completed _____
October	Chapter 14	72 verses	completed _____
November	Chapters 15, 16	67 verses	completed _____ 11/25/18