

First Scripture Reading

Mark 4:26-34

from the Common English Bible

²⁶Then Jesus said, “This is what God’s kingdom is like. It’s as though someone scatters seed on the ground, ²⁷then sleeps and wakes night and day. The seed sprouts and grows, but the farmer doesn’t know how. ²⁸The earth produces crops all by itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full head of grain. ²⁹Whenever the crop is ready, the farmer goes out to cut the grain because it’s harvesttime.” ³⁰He continued, “What’s a good image for God’s kingdom? What parable can I use to explain it? ³¹Consider a mustard seed. When scattered on the ground, it’s the smallest of all the seeds on the earth; ³²but when it’s planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all vegetable plants. It produces such large branches that the birds in the sky are able to nest in its shade.” ³³With many such parables he continued to give them the word, as much as they were able to hear. ³⁴He spoke to them only in parables, then explained everything to his disciples when he was alone with them.

This is the word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm Reading

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from the Common English Bible

¹I pray that the Lord answers you whenever you are in trouble. Let the name of Jacob’s God protect you.

²Let God send help to you from the sanctuary and support you from Zion.

³Let God recall your many grain offerings; let him savor your entirely burned offerings. *Selah*

⁴Let God grant what is in your heart and fulfill all your plans.

⁵Then we will rejoice that you’ve been helped. We will fly our flags in the name of our God. Let the Lord fulfill all your requests!

⁶Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed one;

God answers his anointed one from his heavenly sanctuary, answering with mighty acts of salvation achieved by his strong hand.

⁷Some people trust in chariots, others in horses; but we praise the Lord’s name.

⁸They will collapse and fall, but we will stand up straight and strong.

⁹Lord, save the king! Let him answer us when we cry out!

Second Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17

from the Common English Bible

⁶So we are always confident, because we know that while we are living in the body, we are away from our home with the Lord. ⁷We live by faith and not by sight. ⁸We are confident, and we would prefer to leave the body and to be at home with the Lord. ⁹So our goal is to be acceptable to him, whether we are at home or away from home. ¹⁰We all must appear before Christ in court so that each person can be paid back for the things that were done while in the body, whether they were good or bad. ¹⁴The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: one died for the sake of all; therefore, all died. ¹⁵He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised. ¹⁶So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know him now. ¹⁷So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!