

4th Sunday after Pentecost
“Confidence in the Gospel’s power to give life” Mark 4:26-27
June 16, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Second Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Mark 4:26-27.

“26 And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.”

So far our text.

Last Sunday, we focused on the 3rd petition of the Lord’s Prayer – “Thy will be done”. And we heard from God’s Word that His will is always good and gracious for He sent His Son to storm the devil’s stronghold to take from him what he held captive – the souls of people whose will was evil and bound by sin. Again, who is in the devil’s captivity? Every person who is born into this world with original sin – the sin of Adam and Eve as we heard from last Sunday’s Old Testament reading of Genesis 3.

But, God did not leave Adam and Eve in despair, nor we either. For He made the first promise of the Gospel to them – God’s good and gracious will to save the world. How? We heard in Genesis 3:15 that there was hope in the Seed of Eve!

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

That’s a capital “S” because the Seed of Eve who would bruise the head of the serpent, the devil and take away his power over sinners is Jesus, true Man, born of a woman and true God, the Son of God! Of Sabaoth Lord. He holds the field victorious. Listen to Romans 5:12:

“12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— 15 But the free gift is

not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many...17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

Jesus is called the "Seed" because in Him is life and He alone gives life to this sinful fallen world – to you and me! He gives the gift of righteousness – His righteousness so that those who receive Jesus by faith will reign in this life and eternally! Through the One, Jesus Christ!

So Jesus tells a parable in today's Gospel that is universally witnessed by all people of all ages – the sowing of a physical seed, its germination, its maturing, and its harvesting.

"28 For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

As little children our parents or teachers helped us plant a seed in the soil, add some water and then watch with amazement how the seed sprouts and grows! We didn't understand but accepted that this is how God makes it work.

"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how."

We don't know how. But God does! So we have heard from the opening verses of John chapter 1 many times.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

God alone gives life to all His created world and most importantly to man's soul. In Him is life and the life was the light of men. Who is John talking about again? Jesus, of course...who created the world with His spoken word. He is the giver of all life.

Man, of course, has no power to give life nor rescue himself from eternal death. By one man's offense death reigned, so we heard.

But, the good and gracious will of God is to give new life to His fallen world. And so He sent His Son into the world.

“4 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:4

So, Jesus, the Word made flesh, spoke the words of life to the people. **“33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. 34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.”**

So the children sang “Let your Word be a lamp, be a light unto my feet, let it shine on me, let it shine on me”, based on Psalm 119:105.

And when the God's word is sown, amazing things happen. God gives birth to His people, His church of believers. So Jesus says in our Gospel.

“To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? 31 It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; 32 but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.”

When the seed of the Gospel is sown, God makes His kingdom grow! Especially, on this father's day, we know how important the role of Christian fathers is – to sow God's seed to his family, teach God's word in the home, bring the family to God's house to hear His Word and grow. This is a mystery that we can't understand. Dads and moms sow the seed and then watch it grow. We watch it grow as the children continue to hear God's Word in our day school, and especially in confirmation class.

As the head of the household teaches the powerful Gospel, it gives life. So Martin Luther wrote the small catechism for fathers to teach it especially to their household.

And when that happens, God does amazing things. As we heard in our epistle reading from 2 Corinthians 5:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”

We give thanks to God today for Christian fathers and mothers who have brought their children to be baptized and become one with Christ, to become new creations! And we thank God for parents who continue to bring them up in the faith so that the blade matures and a full ear appears and a baptized child also receives the gift of the Lord’s Supper for the forgiveness of sins.

We don’t have to understand how God does these mighty works, nor can we. We can’t understand how Christ’s body and blood is in with and under the bread and the wine, or how hearing the word produces faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. They are mysteries but we see the results – God’s results of a new creation.

So we hear from 1 Corinthians 3:

“5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”

And finally, God harvests His crop of believers. When? Either when He comes again or when He calls His blessed saints to eternal life. Oh, we know the beautiful words of Revelation 2:10. Our confirmation class heard them again this week.

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

So, people of God, fathers, mothers, children, all believers ...we hear God’s Word of life, His powerful Gospel and live with this sure confidence of eternal life at the final great harvest! Preach the Word. Together His royal priesthood of believers sow the seed and watch the mystery of God’s kingdom grow. Thy Kingdom come! So we pray that it comes to us and to many by our sowing of the seed of the powerful Gospel. Amen

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)