

Sunday Worship on June 16, 2024

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Anne Neuman)

Sunday Order of worship

We Gather

- Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP 328 This is my Father’s world
- Prayer for worship and Lord’s Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 292 Father, I adore you
- Prayer for children

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- First reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24
- Second reading: Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15 (refrain 2)
- Third reading: Mark 4:26-34
- Sermon: The kingdom of God in a mustard seed
- Hymn – BOP 712 Arise your light is come
- Prayer for the people

We Respond

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 830) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey – BOP 687 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

We Serve

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

Responsive Call to Worship

It is good to give God thanks, to sing praises to the Most High!

We will sing for joy to God who has made us glad.

Let us declare God’s steadfast love in the morning,

and God’s faithfulness by night.

So come to worship God with thankful, joyful hearts!

Let us praise God’s holy name together.

Praise song – BOP 328 This is my Father’s world

Prayer of Adoration

Living God, from you come vitality, love and joy. Your peace is our companion, your love is our strength, your Son is our hope. Your Holy Spirit nurtures tiny seeds of purpose and potential, hidden deep in the soil of life, to surprise us with new life. While the earth begins to bloom around us, we bring you our prayers and praise, trusting that your Spirit will renew in us the gifts we need to serve you in faithfulness in the example of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer of confession (Unison) (Let us come to God with the Prayer of confession in Unison)

Living and loving God, as we watch our gardens and our children grow, we confess we often resist the change growth can bring. We form opinions about many things – and cling to them. We fear new insights and new directions. Forgive us when we think already know enough. Grant us faith like the mustard seed, able to grow with your blessing to become a mighty sign of your lively kingdom among us. Amen

Heavenly Father, hear us, as we offer the Prayer that Jesus taught us: (The Lord’s Prayer:) Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ – and Christ died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by God’s generous grace! Rejoice in God’s good gift. **May the Peace of the Lord be with you.**

Praise song – BOP 292 Father, I adore you

Prayer for Illumination:

God of patience and persistence, speak through the Scriptures, and inspire our growth and gratitude, so that we may be changed by what we hear. Open our minds and hearts to a fresh encounter with Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

- First reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24
- Second reading: Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15 (refrain 2)
- Third reading: Mark 4:26-34

“This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God.”

SERMON: The Kingdom of God in a mustard seed

Last Monday, my mom went to Mexico to see my sister. In the airport, when I push the cart, I remembered the time when the baggage cart cost \$2 about 20 years ago. When I went to the airport, I used to gather so many carts to make enough money for parking. Because when you put the cart back, it gave \$1 back. Around that time, 20 so years ago, my mission team from my old church went to the airport to greet Korean newcomers to Toronto. Sometimes, people come here to study without knowing anybody. Although they researched how to take a bus, or how to get to downtown Toronto from airport, when they met some people like us offering help, they felt relieved and appreciated.

I still see one person I met at the airport. For her, I am the first person she met in Toronto. We sometimes remember the time we first met. Through that meeting, she was able to come to my old church and we could become good friends. Through a small event, like going to the airport to preach the gospel, she and I can enjoy our friendship for more than 20 years.

In Mark 4, Jesus is talking about the kingdom of God. **V26, The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the**

seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.

In this process, from sowing seed to harvest, one farming term has passed. It seems like we are the farmer but we don't have a big role. **V26, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground."** I looked up some different versions.

The different versions have different focus. New Living Translation states, **"The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground."** MSG states, **"God's kingdom is like seed thrown on a field by a man who then goes to bed and forgets about it."** The focus is not on the one who scatters seed.

Our pew Bible, the kingdom of God is **as if someone would scatter seed.. it's the situation.** NLT, The kingdom of God is like **a farmer who scatter seed.** The focus is on the farmer. MSG, God's kingdom is **like seed thrown on a field.** The focus is on the seed.

So, the kingdom of God from this passage is something we don't understand. Something the creation works by itself. Something God takes care of, not by us. Something what a farm does.

In the next section, Jesus talks about **the Parable of the mustard seed.** I think it becomes more illustrative. It gives more vivid image. The mustard seed is the representation of small things. **"The kingdom of God... is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet 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."**

(Tree image) This image of the big mustard tree is the ultimate goal. This is the completion of what was started. It is the accomplished kingdom of God.

But, Jesus seems to put more focus on the seed now. This seed has the future of becoming a big tree. But, what about now? A seed. Not even spouted.

This teaches us the concept of **Already but Not yet**

Seed is like a foretaste of what will come for sure. Example. **(shower image)** When you stepped into your shower, just before you turn on the water, one drop of water might fall on you. That's the foretaste of what is to come.

What is the one drop of water? The seed! It gives us the sure hope of the warm and nice shower. And it is Jesus Christ, who will complete the **Kingdom of God. (image)**

Heaven. We accept this heaven to be the place where God lives. It is understood to be joyful, happy, no sorrow, no tears, but praise God always.

Question. Where is the heaven now?

Sometimes, we look up the sky. We sometimes think that God's throne is up in the air and he is watching over us down from the sky. But, what about in our hearts?

Oh~ oh~ oh~ oh~ oh~ oh~ Heaven is in my heart. Oh~ oh~ oh~ oh~ oh~ oh~ Heaven is in my heart. The kingdom of our God is here. Heaven is in my heart. The presence of His majesty, heaven is in my heart.

Heaven is in my heart. That is the concept of Already but Not yet.

Heaven is already in our hearts, but the Kingdom of God is not completed yet.

The Kingdom of God came to us when Jesus came to the earth. And the Kingdom will be accomplished when Jesus returns.

This is what Jesus is telling us. You have the **seed. (image)** But, when it is sown, it will grow to a big tree. Jesus came to us, and taught us his truth. We have his truth and we are to grow like the tree. And we are able to experience the Kingdom of God in the process because the Kingdom of God is placed in our hearts. We have Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord in our hearts. Therefore, we have his kingdom in our hearts even though it is not completed yet. As we wait for the second coming of our Jesus Christ, we continue to live in hope of his coming. We can have the hope for the biggest mustard tree where the birds of the air can make nests in its branches and rest in its shade. We are the trees. Birds are the people. Because we have the kingdom of God in our hearts, we can share the peace and comfort to our surroundings.

I started today's sermon (image) with the example of meeting people from the airport and relieving their stress and providing them comfortable feelings by connecting. It was a big deal, but not huge. It was doable activity at that time.

Now, in your life(image), can you invite anyone to the kingdom of God?

What do you have to do?

Something like a mustard seed. A warm welcome. Sharing your smile, or a handshake. Sharing your life stories. Or offering a napkin when someone has a runny nose.

And standing firm in the truth. A Tree stands firm by rooting its root firm in the earth. It holds the earth and not be shaken. We hold the truth of God and not be shaken. By our lives rooted in God's truth and love, we display the kingdom of God through our lives.

The kingdom of God is already here in our hearts, but not yet completed.

Like the first part, the farmer sows seed, and sleep and rise, sleep and rise, sleep and rise in waiting. One day, he looks the field, then he realizes that oh now is the harvest time. That is the kingdom of God. We cannot see the harvest right now, but with our small actions, we can plant seeds around our lives.

Let us stand firm in the love of God and the truth of God. As we grow in God like the tree, then God works in our situations. God makes the way. God accomplished his plan. God makes it happen. God completes what he started. Let us place our hope in the small mustard seed that will grow up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs. We are the mustard seeds, and that is the kingdom of God.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

Praise song – BOP 712 Arise your light is come

Prayer for the people

Jesus Christ, thank you for coming to us. Thank you for placing the seed in our hearts. We have the hope to become the greatest and biggest trees of all for you. We have the hope to have large branches where people can come and rest and be comforted and receive power to hang on. Help us stand firm like the tree. Help us hold on to your truth and rely on your love always.

We pray for the people who are providing help where wars are, and where poverty is, where there is no peace. Loving God, empower all the helpers and all the ministries sharing your kingdom. Make them like the mustard trees, so they can benefit their surroundings. Pour out your

love and truth upon them, so that they don't get weary and fall down. Always, provide them enough resources so they can become the channel of blessings of your kingdom.

We pray for our church. Thank you for Wednesday Community Café and Martha's Table. These are the important means of sharing your love with our community. Glorious God, bless all the helpers and volunteers. Strengthen them and give them good rest for the summer break. And bless all the people come and enjoy your love. Fill their needs and fill their spirits with you.

There are prayers need in our church. We cannot know all the details of everyone, but God, you know all. Listen to the prayers of our people, and grant them with your abundant love and grace and mercy.

As we continue to worship you, fill us with your love and truth. Be glorified through us. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: The parables of farming and a mustard seed remind us that God's kingdom grows from small beginnings with surprising results. So give to God as you are able, and trust that God will honour your generosity for the purposes of God's Spirit at work among us and beyond us. Let us praise God and glorify him with the Doxology (BOP #830.)

Offering prayer:

God of small seeds and secret growth, bless the gifts we bring to you. Use them as seeds of new life in our community and in your world. Grow results we cannot even imagine – within us, among us, because of us and beyond us, for the sake of Christ, our Living God. Amen.

Song for the Journey – BOP 687 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. Where is the kingdom of God? In your hearts. You have the seed of the kingdom of God. Have hope in the Lord. God accomplishes what he started. He placed the seed in your heart, he will make it grow and you will become like a mustard tree. The kingdom of God is in your heart. Enjoy.

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.