

After last week's challenge to examine our allegiances and remain faithful to God's Reign, this week the Lectionary offers us a message of encouragement and comfort which will help us to do just that. The Scriptures this week remind us that small contributions are significant in God's economy, and that God works in mysterious hidden ways to bring forth fruit in our lives.

As we worship this week, may we know again the power of small things, and may we remember the hidden, but constant, impact of God's Reign in our lives and our world.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Samuel 15 : 34 - 16:13

King David's reign will dominate the story, and we now approach those events. Saul had been Israel's first-ever king, but failed to fulfil God's commands. The prophet Samuel is now sent by God to Bethlehem, to the family of Jesse, where the least likely of his sons is the chosen one.

The Psalm - Psalm 20

A prayer that God may provide and protect, bringing victory and success to the king, and ensuring that the one who trusts in God remains steadfast.

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

Paul has been writing of the frailty of our bodies compared with the strength of God's grace within us. He goes on to say that once we make our decisions to live wholly for Christ, both our future destiny and our present nature have been changed.

Mark 4 : 26-34

Mark collected together several of Jesus's parables into one session of his Gospel. Here are two of them, about how the kingdom seems scarcely visible yet is inevitably growing, as God gives life to the seed.

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord,
who never failest to help and govern them
whom thou dost bring up in thy steadfast fear and love;
Keep us, we beseech thee,
under the protection of thy good providence,
and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Lord, you have taught us
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
Send your Holy Spirit
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,

without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Jesus' homecoming was attended by enthusiastic crowds but also by dissenters, who attributed his good works to Satan. That we might be faithful to the One who calls us his "family", blessing his goodness and striving to follow his example, we pray "True Son of God and Son of Man," and respond, "Keep us faithful, keep us true."

That the Christ's church would remain faithful in its witness to the truth of the gospel, we pray: True Son of God and Son of Man. **Keep us faithful, keep us true.**

That where the church of Jesus Christ finds itself a minority in the midst of unfaith, it may not succumb and accept defeat. True Son of God and Son of Man. **Keep us faithful, keep us true.**

That homes of the church that are afflicted with violence, anger, or abuse, may find refuge and counsel in God's Word. True Son of God and Son of Man. **Keep us faithful, keep us true.**

That our congregation may be enabled to embrace the lost, the fallen, and the wayward of our community. True Son of God and Son of Man. **Keep us faithful, keep us true.**

That those who participated in baptismal and confirmation preparation, may be blessed with increasing faith and strengthened in continued, regular worship we pray: True Son of God and Son of Man. **Keep us faithful, keep us true.**

Pardon us, O God, when we are so concerned with ourselves and those near to us that we fail to pray for others. Instill within us your compassion. True Son of God and Son of Man. **Keep us faithful, keep us true.**

Let your loving Spirit, O God, announce again the "Abba" word of our divine parentage and our sure inclusion as members of your family.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Presider or deacon

As the kingdom of God spreads among us, let us offer prayers for the whole world and for every person in every need.

Deacon or other leader

For every holy gathering and for all who enter with faith.

Lord, have mercy.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

Lord, have mercy.

For mercy, justice, and peace throughout the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For this city and for every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the hungry and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, the dying and the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with Saint (name of Parish) and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

God who scatters the seed of faith, hear the prayers we offer this day and make every thing new; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Loving Father,
we thank you for feeding us at the supper of your Son.
Sustain us with your Spirit,
that we may serve you here on earth
until our joy is complete in heaven,
and we share in the eternal banquet
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Your hand is upon your people, O God,
to guide and protect them through the ages.
Keep in your service
those you have called and anointed,
that the powers of this world may not overwhelm us,
but that, secure in your love,
we may carry out your will
in the face of all adversity. Amen.

O God our ruler and shepherd,
you anointed Jesus
as the king and servant of your people.
Make us attentive to your word,

that we may accept your reign over us
and serve you alone. Amen.

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.
... Intercessions....
Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
... Intercessions....
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
... Intercessions....
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
... Intercessions....
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,

to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.

We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.

... Intercessions....

Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.

... Intercessions....

Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.

... Intercessions....Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Mighty God,
to you belong the mysteries of the universe.
You transform shepherds into kings,
the smallest seeds into magnificent trees,
and hardened hearts into loving ones.
Bless us with your life-giving Spirit,
re-create us in your image,
and shape us to your purposes,
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Creating God,
your reign of love makes all things new.
Plant seeds of confidence and gladness in our hearts,
so that, trusting your word,

we may live no longer for ourselves
but for him who died and was raised for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Both the Gospel and its related readings, and the continuous Old Testament reading present two main thoughts this week. The main theme is that of small things which grow to have significant impact and influence. In Samuel, the arrogant Saul is replaced by David, the youngest son of an insignificant family in an unimportant village. It is God who sees the heart, and takes the "small" person who trusts in God and makes him or her someone of significance in God's purposes. Similarly, Psalm 20 reflects on how those who trust in God know God's victory and success. In the Gospel, the small mustard seed becomes a large tree, revealing how important small contributions, commitments and actions are for the growth of God's Reign in our world. This is supported by Ezekiel's vision of the small branch that becomes a mighty tree on a mountaintop. The second, complementary thought in this week's readings, is that God nurtures and sustains God's people and God's Reign, bringing growth, fruit and flourishing even though we may not know how this comes to be. The Gospel expresses this clearly in the first parables in this week's pericope, but Psalm 92 also expresses this as it celebrates how God enables the godly to flourish. Finally, Paul's letter calls us to respond to God's gracious, mysterious kingdom work in our hearts and lives by committing to living lives rooted in Christ's love, and based on faith, not on the sight of goal-orientation or of human expectations. Flowing from last week's challenge to our allegiances, and the call to remain faithful to God in spite of what may come, this week's promise of God's hidden activity to bring growth, fruit and flourishing in our lives is a comforting, encouraging gift.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: There are two ways this week's theme can be applied to the struggles of our world, depending on whether we focus on the Gospel or the Old Testament. The primary approach would be to recognise that, in the quest for justice, peace and love in our world, results can often be difficult to see, and our efforts can often feel like futile attempts to push back the tide. However, when we can embrace Paul's call to walk by faith and not by sight, and when we can trust that God's Reign is at work in and through us to bring forth the fruit of God's Reign, we can renew our commitment to service and activism. When we recognise that the smallest commitments and contributions, and the least significant people can have a great impact for God's Reign, we are inspired to do what we can and not fret about what we cannot do. As the old saying goes, learning to "think globally and act locally" is a kingdom principle as much as anything. If the Gospel is the focus of our meditations this week, though, there is a second possible direction that the readings can take us, and that is into a specific focus on the natural, growing world. The use of nature's growing processes as a constant metaphor for God's Reign reveals not just the truth of God's work in our world, but also God's commitment to our planet as well as to human beings. In a world where our planet and the creatures on it are under threat, the value God places on the green and growing things of our world is a challenge and a call to take our place as the custodians of creation that humanity is called to be. And again, even in this work of creation care the importance of small contributions and actions cannot be over stated.

LOCAL APPLICATION: For each of us as individual Christ-followers, and for our communities, this week is one of great encouragement. It is easy to become disheartened

in our attempts to love others when we so often fall into destructive and hurtful patterns, and when our efforts to love so often feel inadequate. It is easy to lose hope when family members or friends or companions in community seem to ignore or fail to respond to our attempts to serve and love. It can be frustrating when we seek to make a contribution and we feel that our gifts or opportunities are insufficient or that the resources we bring are too meagre. However, this week's theme calls us to value the small, the insignificant, the hidden. Every act of service, every gesture of love, every gift we give has value and makes a difference in the work of God's Reign in our communities and in our own hearts. We may not be talented or well-known or wealthy or well-connected, but we all have fruit that we can produce and that God can use – often in ways we that we won't even know. The invitation, then, is to learn to value our small efforts and contributions as God does, and to stay faithful even when we don't see the results of our work.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13:

- What does it mean for God to be sorry God did something? I hope God is never sorry/disappointed over something done in relation to me! What weighty words.
- This is a classic story of God calling an unexpected person. David seems to be the last choice of all the brothers - except to God.
- "how long will you grieve?" God asks Samuel. Sometimes we can get bogged down in bad decisions, plans gone wrong, etc., that distract us from following God. God says - Get on with it. There are other plans. Other ways I can work. You just have to keep moving, keep being open to God's creativity.
- "for the Lord does not see as mortals see" - THANK GOD for that!!! God sees insides, not outsides. God sees potential, not past.

Psalm 20:

- This is a psalm that is a prayer of blessing for someone else: "May God do ____ for you." Do you pray blessings on others? Do you let them know you are doing so for them?
- "May [God] grant you your heart's desire, and fulfill all your plans." - What is *your* true heart's desire?
- "Some take pride in chariots, some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God." Well said. Where does your pride come from - what do you put your pride in?

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

- "we walk by faith, not by sight." I've played trust-building games at camp when I was little, where one partner would be blindfolded, the other leading the blindfolded one on a "faith walk." For those who have the gift of sight, this kind of play is a real challenge. God asks us to make our whole life plan based on where God leads, not the road that *we may see* ahead of us. That's a challenge!
- "we make it our aim to please God." Sometimes when I've struggled to know what was right or wrong in a situation, I've reframed the issue: "What action would be

most pleasing to God?" Looking at it this way has helped - something may not be *wrong* per se, but I can sometimes figure out what might please God the most.

- "well known to God." Ah, Paul and his ego. Are you well known to God? I hope so, but I'm not always so confident of myself as Paul ;) "to boast about us." Paul uses the word boast more than any other person in the scriptures. This has always been my struggle with Paul. I know what he's saying, but the way he says it...
- "we regard no one from a human point of view" - instead we're called to see each other through Jesus' eyes, through God's eyes. How does that change how you see people?
- "new creations" - a new chance in Christ. Clean slate. Fresh hope.

Mark 4:26-34:

- What's this first section of parable about? [Chris Haslam](#) says that Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God will continue to grow even if we don't see it, and even if we do "not know how", like the planter here. Still, the kingdom arrives and harvest comes. Don't miss it! It happens with us or in spite of us.
- "greatest of all the shrubs"? Hardly! Sure, the mustard seed will grow into a hardly plant, but not enormous. But Jesus' point is that the kingdom of God is deceptively pervasive! He exaggerates the analogy to make the point - bigger than you can imagine!
- "explained everything in private to his disciples." What's the benefit of not explaining the parables to everyone, do you think?

by Beth Quick.

SERMON OUTLINE

Mark 4:26-34 The kingdom of God is as if...

Jesus continues his teaching about the kingdom of God...

1. The Grain that is Sown 26:- He had just told and explained the Parable of the Sower & now continues in a similar vein *The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground...* familiar imagery for all...

2. The Growth that is Sure 27-31: - given favourable conditions – as he *27 would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how* – the unchanging miracle of growth leading to harvest...

a) the Growing Seed: *28The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.*

b) the Mustard Seed - *the smallest of all the seeds on earth* – yet it grows remarkably and amazingly... So it is with the kingdom of God and His Mission to the world – beginning with the most unlikely of candidates for discipleship – yet producing amazing growth and astonishing results.

3. The Greatness that is Seen 32-34:- as the mustard seed develops into a tree – 8-10ft tall - *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.*

So Jesus uses the medium of parables to promote his teaching – to illustrate the truth of the kingdom and

to stimulate the thoughts of the disciples....

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them... 34he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples

bu Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Sermons that work - The Episcopal Church site. See Sermon for Pentecost 3 Proper 6

This year's sermons are not posted far in advance

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/05/?cat=7>

Church of Scotland - See both pdfs of resources for June and Pentecost 3 at:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/starters_for_sunday

"Noisy Spring," Dr. Kimberleigh Buchanan, Day 1. Sermon on the gospel reading.

http://day1.org/1325-noisy_spring

The Longing for Home - Sermon illustration by Frederick Buechner on 2 Corinthians 5: 6 - 8. Here are three excerpts from Buechner's sermon "The Longing for Home", first published in The Longing for Home and again in Secrets in the Dark.

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-longing-home>

CHILDREN

Church of Scotland - resources for 17th June at:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/starters_for_sunday

[Worshipping with Children](#), Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown, 2012.

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/year-b-proper-6-11th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Praise To The Lord, The Almighty

O Jesus I Have Promised

O Master Let Me Walk With Thee

O Worship The King

All Creatures Of Our God And King

May The Words Of My Mouth (Link to YouTube video)

Servant Song (Link to YouTube video) This can be sung as "Brother, sister, let me serve you..." to be gender inclusive)

Creator King (Link to YouTube video)

Your Word

Priceless Vision