

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

I am the one who makes the low trees grow.

First Reading

The just will flourish like the palm-tree
and grow like a Lebanon cedar.

Psalm

Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot,
then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

Gospel

Almighty God, our hope and our strength,
without you we falter.
Help us to follow Christ
and to live according to your will.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Ezekiel 17: 22-24; Psalm 91 (92); 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10; Mark 4: 26-34



'The Kingdom
of God
is like a
mustard seed,
the smallest
of seeds,
yet grows into
the biggest
shrub of them'

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year B, 16th June 2024

'This is what the Kingdom of God is like ...'

Our readings this week are full of hope and confidence. May we grow in joyful hope as we pray and ponder them. The theme of growth, seeds, and trees winds in and out of these readings. So does the notion of universality: God's kingdom is for the whole of humanity.

In the **First Reading**, God, through the prophet Ezekiel, promises the tiny remnant of Israel that they will grow into a new people, just as the cedar grows from a small shoot.

The **Psalm** is a song of thanksgiving to the Lord who enables the just to grow and flourish like a cedar.

St Paul, in the **Second Reading**, reminds the Corinthians of the confidence they have, despite the tensions of living while waiting for the Lord. This fills them with the expectation of being with him one day.

The **Gospel** contains two parables of the Kingdom: that of the seed, growing secretly; and the parable of the mustard seed. Both parables reveal God working continuously for the growth of his kingdom.

As we go about our lives this week, we may find other metaphors for the God who works secretly for his kingdom in all those around us, in our surroundings and in all events.



Opening Prayer

O God, strength of those who hope in you,
graciously hear our pleas,
and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing,
grant us always the help of your grace,
that in following your commands
we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.

First Reading Ezekiel 17: 22–24

The Lord says this:
‘From the top of the cedar,
from the highest branch I will take a shoot
and plant it myself on a very high mountain.
I will plant it on the high mountain of Israel.
It will sprout branches and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar.
Every kind of bird will live beneath it,
every winged creature rest in the shade of its branches.
And every tree of the field will learn that I, the Lord, am the one
who stunts tall trees and makes the low ones grow,
who withers green trees and makes the withered green.
I, the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.’

As I settle to pray, I ask the Lord to be open to his word today.

Having read the text carefully, I consider how these words, addressed to the small group of the exiled people of Israel, speak to me and my world today.

Despite the unpromising situation, God wants his kingdom to be visible. He takes a shoot from the *highest* branch, from the *top* of the tree and plants it on the *highest mountain*.

Does this challenge me in any way?
How high is the kingdom in my priorities?

Am I unashamedly proud to be more and more part of it ... to profess it gently but publicly?

I look at my life and speak to the Lord of this.

God welcomes all people into his Kingdom. In it all find a home, shelter, rest, nourishment.

How can this be true for me? For those I love? For everyone I meet?

I ponder these questions and perhaps ask the Lord to show and guide me.

The Lord reminds us that it is he who gives green life and growth, and he promises to do so. As I pray, I may ask him to strengthen my faith in his promises, and my trust in his loving care.

I may also pray that his kingdom will spread throughout our world.

I draw my prayer to a close with a slow ‘*Our Father ...*’

Gospel Mark 4: 26–34

Jesus said: ‘This is what the Kingdom of God is like.
A man throws seed on the land. Night and day while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap because the harvest has come.’

He also said, ‘What can we say the Kingdom of God is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like the mustard seed which at the time of its sowing in the soil is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.’

Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were alone.

I come to my place of prayer. I gently become aware of God’s presence in and around me. I spend time resting in his all-embracing love.

When I am ready, I slowly read and re-read the Gospel text.

What strikes me in the first parable?

Maybe I can imagine myself as a seed planted in God’s rich soil.
What does this mean in my life?

It is the land that produces the grain.

How can I let God work in me, enabling me to grow and flourish in him, rather than depending on my own efforts?

I give time to being silently aware of God’s work deep within me.

Perhaps the second parable reminds me of the breadth of the Kingdom of God. In what ways am I part of it?

And how can I, in my turn, be welcoming and inclusive in prayer and action?

I speak to the Lord of all this, giving time to listen to him.

I ask the Lord to deepen my understanding of his Kingdom as I ponder on these parables during this week.

I take the time to end my prayer slowly in a spirit of thanksgiving.