

# Sunday, June 17

First Reading  
[Ezekiel 17:22-24](#)

Psalm  
[Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15](#)

Second Reading  
[2 Corinthians 5:6-10](#)  
[\[11-13\] 14-17](#)

Gospel  
[Mark 4:26-34](#)

## Mark 4:26-34

<sup>26</sup>Then Jesus said, "This is what God's kingdom is like. It's as though someone scatters seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup>then sleeps and wakes night and day. The seed sprouts and grows, but the farmer doesn't know how. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces crops all by itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full head of grain. <sup>29</sup>Whenever the crop is ready, the farmer goes out to cut the grain because it's harvest time."

<sup>30</sup>He continued, "What's a good image for God's kingdom? What parable can I use to explain it?"

<sup>31</sup>Consider a mustard seed. When scattered on the ground, it's the smallest of all the seeds on

the earth; <sup>32</sup>but 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."

<sup>33</sup>With many such parables he continued to give them the word, as much as they were able to hear. <sup>34</sup>He spoke to them only in parables, then explained everything to his disciples when he was alone with them.

## OPENING PRAYER

O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall  
proclaim your praise.  
Glory to the Father,  
and to the Son and to  
the Holy Spirit: as it  
was in the beginning,  
is now, and will be  
forever. Amen.

## I WONDER

- I wonder if the person who planted the tiny seed knew it would grow so large.
- I wonder what the person was doing while the plant was growing.
- I wonder if the plant could ever go back into that tiny seed.
- I wonder how the birds felt when they found the plant
- I wonder what the plant really is.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank you  
for making even the  
smallest among us  
able to do big things.  
And thank you for  
turning our small acts  
into big ones. Today  
we pray that you open  
our eyes to small  
ways we can make  
our world better for  
all, big and small. We  
pray, too, that you  
help us sow seeds of  
faith along our paths.  
Amen.

Additional prayer ideas  
on Page 2.

## SLOW DEVOTIONS

Before you start, you'll need two things: a scruffy weed and a seed. (There's a mustard seed in your bag)

Read vs 26-29, then look at the seed. How will this seed grow? Think of all the things it needs to thrive. <sup>z z z</sup> What does the farmer provide?  Who provides the rest? How is this like the kingdom of God?

Read vs 30-32. Take a look at the weed. Why is this a weed and not a flower? Did you know that mustard is considered an invasive weed like crabgrass or buckthorn? What does that tell you about the kingdom of God? What are the birds in this story? What is the nest and shade?

## ACTIVE DEVOTIONS

→ **Blowing seeds:** Sit on one side of the table or behind a line on the floor. Give everyone a mustard seed. If you have straws, pass one to each person. When the designated person says, "Go," everyone will BLOW the seed across the table or across the finish line on the floor. Who was quickest? Who was straightest?

→ **Tiny acts, big results:** Think of a project that needs to get done. Break it down into small tasks and assign one to each in the group, according to ability. Even small kids can pull weeds, carry paint brushes, or wipe up messes. Get it done!

# Going Deeper

## PRAY A NEW WAY

**Beach ball prayer:** Select someone to start the prayer. Holding the ball, the leader says, “**Dear Lord, You give us so many reasons to praise you. We thank you for this time together. We thank you for sending us your son to guide and walk with us. And we thank you for ...**” The leader tosses the ball to someone in the group, who shouts out the first thing that pops into their head and then tosses the ball to another. Keep tossing the ball until everyone has shared — keep going if the group wants!

**Leader-led prayer:** Select a leader. Each member of the group shares their prayer request with the group. This can be done at the start of the devotion time or the end. The leader takes notes and includes the requests in the closing prayer. (This is a great way to teach kids to be comfortable with making up their own prayers.)

**Praying with posture:** Follow your heart’s lead to pray with mind and body. You can use the prayer below or say your own.

- Kneeling
- Sitting
- Standing
- Bowing
- Lying prostrate (face-down and flat)
- Hands up

**O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## Parables and seeds

“This is what God’s kingdom is like...” So, what is it like? In the first parable it could be that the kingdom is something we have to work hard at – to plant and watch and be ready to bring in the harvest. Or, it could be that we are totally powerless to control the coming kingdom – that God is in charge of how, when and where it grows. We just throw out seeds and watch in wonder as God does the work. That’s scary and vulnerable, because it leaves everything in God’s hands. David Lose once said, “Faith is a lot more like falling in love than making a decision. Because kingdom-faith, like love, is something that comes from the outside and grabs hold of you, whether you want it to or not.”<sup>1</sup>

What is the kingdom of God like? In the second parable it could be that the kingdom is about little things growing into really large things. Or it could be about the kingdom starting small and slowly penetrating through everything and taking over, even if we don’t want it to. Mustard, after all, was an invasive species, that would run amok through your garden, despite your best efforts to keep it out. (Think dandelions or buckthorn.)

So what is the kingdom of God like? What do you think it is like? What parable would you tell for it?

<sup>1</sup>David Lose, “Preach the Truth Slant,” <http://www.davidlose.net/2015/06/pentecost-3-b-preach-the-truth-slant/>

## ANYTIME ACTIVITIES

- ★ Pray and color
- ★ Gratitude photo hunt
- ★ “I Spy” game
- ★ Finger labyrinth

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