

PROPERthoughts

Series B, Proper 6

Lessons for Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 16, 2024

Psalm 1 ~ *A contrast of the Way of the Wicked who perish, with the Way of the Righteous, who flourish*

Ezekiel 17:22–24 ~ *God promised to restore His kingdom as a sprig from a cedar would grow to a great tree.*

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (11-17) ~ *In faith we trust that God will bring us new life from death through Jesus Christ.*

Mark 4:26–34 ~ *The Kingdom of God grows from the power of God's word, as a seed produces a plant.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: God's Promise is Powerful!

When the Jewish people were carried into captivity in Babylon, God described the phenomenal growth of a sprig of cedar into a giant tree to encourage them with his promise of restoration. God has also promised us an eternal home in heaven, secured by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and guaranteed by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives today. Although God's promise to us in the work of Jesus may seem small and insignificant, the Kingdom of God grows to provide opportunity for service to people throughout the world.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: I have heard Your promise, God, in the call of Your Spirit. Your powerful Word has planted the seed of faith in my heart. Let me trust Your forgiving love in Jesus Christ so that I will be a willing worker in Your Kingdom of Grace. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Just as a little seed produces a great plant, so God uses each gift to produce a great result for His kingdom. Our dollars, blessed by the power of the Spirit, carry God's life producing Word to neighbors, distant and near.

OFFERING PRAYER: Gracious and loving Lord, You have planted faith in our hearts by the power of Your Word. Bless these gifts we bring today that through them a sprig of faith may sprout in the lives of those who still do not know the grace of Your kingdom. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Just as the Jewish people living in captivity in Babylon and facing death in a foreign land needed encouragement to live by God's promise of restoration and renewal, so we also become discouraged when we recognize our approaching death or experience the death of those close to us. God's promise of new life through the death of Jesus Christ is affirmed in his resurrection and illustrated by the growth of a great plant from a tiny seed. Not only does the power of God's word give us strength to flourish in this dying world; it also gives us eternal promise of fulfillment in the Kingdom of heaven.

Questions to Consider: When is a promise more than a promise?

- How did God's promise through Ezekiel of a cedar from a tiny sprig sustain God's people?
- Where does the power for our life by faith come from for us to live to please God?
- When a farmer plants a crop, what is the power that produces the harvest?
- Where do we see the power of God's promise for us in this life and in life after death?

Bonus on Page Two: Jesse's Stump (God brings us new life through the spring from the stump of Jesse's tree.)

JESSE'S STUMP

*"There shall come forth a shoot
from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow
out of his roots!"*

(Isaiah 11:1)

*"When the time had fully come,
God sent forth his Son
born of a woman,
born under the law,
to redeem those who were
under the law,
so that we might receive
adoption as sons."*

(Galatians 4:4-5)

**At last the shoot from Jesse's stump has sprung
to life, to give new life to those who mourn.
God chose a girl who was herself still young
when His own time had come. The Christ was born
an infant under God's own law, to make
you free from every curse the law can give.
God's Son took up your life so God could take
you as His own; He asks that now you live
the way old Simeon must have lived when he
had seen with his own eyes, the little boy
who'd be a light of love for all to see,
who'd win for all, God's peace and Christmas joy.**

*"With my own eyes I have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the
presence of all peoples:
A light to reveal your ways to the
Gentiles,
and bring glory to your people
Israel.*

(Luke 2:30-32)

**You too, have seen God's grace abundantly;
now go, and serve the Lord, for you are free!**

-- Gilbert Franke, 12/1975