

PENTECOST 4 (2018)

Mark 4 Ezekiel 17

²⁶ And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰ And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, **but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.**¹

In the Name of Jesus.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mk 4:26–34). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

‘HIS OWN,’ my dear ones, is OUR BOAST—since OUR BOAST is that we are ‘NOTHING-BUT-GIVEN-TO...—BY THE SPIRIT OF JESUS!’ The BAPTIZED! MORE, AND MORE, AND MORE—not for the crowds and the curious; but for those baptized, the sinners, the little ones He cares about to the littlest detail.

THERE, like THAT, we are ‘Jesus-sure!’ THERE—where HE speaks, and then speaks to us even MORE!

So even I can pray—NOT babbling on and on, trying to tilt and influence the clouds and stars above to today’s desired advantage—but the certainty of ‘God-so-given-to-me’ that That God cannot wiggle out of paying attention to me—AS IF! As if He’d ever want to, after the Christ-Event! The cross, the tomb, the skies—ALL, One just like ME, says FAITH! And GLAD to BE just like: You, me, all the birds who seek shelter and rest and calm, after everything else proves a mirage.

HE is that seed growing—how, no man knows!

Oh, men can imagine the Law—especially in the Hand of and angry Sky, angry Heaven, angry God! No man ever

conceived the Holy Spirit's Gospel: that GOD became little with the little—and there's lots and lots of us little 'uns! Hallelujah!

HE is that SMALLEST of seeds—and that's where He wants us always to start, daily, with our Baptism, with Him, with the sinners, confessing that WE CANNOT MATCH God our Heavenly Father—and trusting that God our Heavenly Father is not LOOKING for US to match HIM!

NOT NOW!

NOT...SINCE...THE...SON...OF...GOD!

OK—SIMPLIFY, PASTOR!

Will God take your call so very late in the day? AFTER you have tried to unravel the tight knots of living with every other resource you have—with so little evident FAITH—like ME!—almost NO FAITH!—that EVERY other resource seems so much more capable than the bare word of our Baptism into Christ? In trouble? BRAINS!

MONEY! INFLUENCE! POPULAR OPINION?
SPEED?! Hussle, hussle, hussle!

When we run through ALL our idolatries first—our towers and banks of trust FIRST--....CAN we offend our GOD more?

When we leave prayer and His Word and His Spirit to last place and least—come now, is the Offended God going to turn His ear to us, much less GLUE His ear to our desperate state, when He is the LAST HOPE we have?

Sure thing! Jesus-sure! Jesus Christ/God guarantees it! In fact, He pledges that there is no other God!

Oh, it is good and a FINE miracle of The Holy Spirit at-home with us, that when anxiety of losing idols, or even anxiety about our standing with the Living God is addressed FIRST with HIS pledges and gifts and certainties: the Word, the Body and the Blood, the assembly of the baptized...

But the LAW says ‘Here’s the goal—now measure yourself against that goal, and think of what heaven thinks of YOU!’

The Gospel says:

God is little now, in Jesus Christ, the King of God, the Son of God. Little like those confessing their sins in the Jordan, with HIM! Little like the resurrection story in The Gospel According to Saint Mark!

Let’s review!

A young man—was it the same young man who ran from those who arrested Jesus, after they tore away his bedclothes? Running away naked, with NOTHING in this world in which to wrap himself?! And there the young man sat, in the tomb—otherwise empty. DRESSED in the same wrapping in which they wrapped the despised King!

And—how LITTLE can you become!

“Tell my so-called DISCIPLES—but He does NOT say ‘so-called’—not He!—they ARE MY disciples; because, WHO in the world needs the teaching of the Gospel MORE, than the betrayer, those who abandoned me—oh, and make sure you find My Best Bud, Who denied three times, calling curses down from heaven to swear that he doesn’t even know my Name?! When the nations read how much I’m into THAT MAN, no one will ever feel left out of heaven again!”

And—joy to the world! To WHOM does the young man entrust the message of a King NO ONE has ever looked for? The women, trembling and bewildered, who say nothing to no one—the text says. But, here we are!

LOOK...FOR...THE...LITTLE! My dear ones! THERE—LITTLE—you will find a place to rest your wings for certain, with how many others?

REST your wings in the Old Covenant branches and leaves promised, now fulfilled!:

¹⁵ For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
 who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
 “I dwell in the high and holy place,

and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite. ²

⁶For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly,
but the haughty he knows from afar. ³

²³One's pride will bring him low,
but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor. ⁴

***Honor! Shelter! So what can we drop and leave
behind and leave in our tombs?***

⁶Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great,
⁷for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble. ⁵

Or, the Lord addresses poor Job, to save him and us:

⁹Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Is 57:15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ps 138:6). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Pr 29:23). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Pr 25:6–7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

- ¹⁰ “Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and splendor.
- ¹¹ Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.
- ¹² Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low
and tread down the wicked where they stand.
- ¹³ Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.
- ¹⁴ Then will I also acknowledge to you
that your own right hand can save you. ⁶

OUR power, OUR right hand now is....

HIS ‘Right Hand’—the Teacher Whose disciples
betrayed and denied and abandoned!

The KING enthroned on the cross of shame.

The RISEN One, Who left the Glad Tidings of His
leaving the Grave to some young man; who then told
trembling and bewildered women who told no one
nothing—the text says.

Where WE hear of Him!

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Job 40:9–14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Leaving US: Nothing-but-given-to!

Given-to again, and again, and again! AS IF the Spirit of This Man is heaven-bent on saving even you and me!

What, precisely, did the Lord ADD to the story of growing seeds of grain and the far-branching mustard seed?

It can be two things. One, what I've told you: the grain that is in HIS hand, the seed of mustard too. And, we receive THEIR message, when we are GIVEN what they tell OF HIM!

Second—your poor pastor just can't stop Bible-class mode!

The Ezekiel lesson today told of a planting the Lord would do, that would not ever be uprooted.

Read that chapter of Ezekiel! YOU DO have time this week! I beg you to read, mark, learn, inwardly digest that chapter! Chapter 17!

The Spirit speaks to Ezekiel of a great WORLD power, high and mighty, crushing nations, moving peoples en masse, boasting, scaring. But how each such power ends up a hollow boast!

A King, an Anointed, A CHRIST was pledged to those poor people, in Exile, yearning for the Promised Land. Like you; and me; and how many others?

Until That Land, until That Day, you will find your God, your Heaven, your King and your God, your Nesting Place—in a place Jesus calls ‘roomy enough for all My disciples!’

But the world, the devil, even the Old Adam inside us, will think such a place and people beneath notice, TOO small to bother with.

So teaches the Teacher! Repent, and trust the Good News!

I prayed this week that I would teach HIS disciples what GOSPEL these stories are. Only the Spirit knows the Gospel! Never think that YOUR prayer is tiny—TOO TINY—for the Spirit to teach EVEN PASTOR PAUL the

Gospel! WHO BETTER to learn the Spirit's Heart, that one who knows Him so little?!

In fact, says the Spirit of Jesus: He's got nothing better to do than to hear your prayers!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!