

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 6.13.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for Sunday, June 13, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (at 9:00 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Ezekiel 17:22-24 A tiny sprig will become a mighty cedar

²²Thus says the Lord God: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar.

And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. ²⁴And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. **I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.**"

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO EZEKIEL, CHAPTER 17

1. Surely the Lord is talking about more than just trees. To what is He referring?
2. What is the goal (the planned outcome) for the planting of the sprig?
3. Who or what might be "the trees of the field" in vs. 24?
4. What does the end of vs. 24 say about God's Word?
5. What does this text say about what God is doing in your life through Jesus?

2ND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, 14-17 New creation living

¹For we know that if the **tent** that is our earthly **home** is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this **tent** we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this **tent**, we groan, being burdened — not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are **at home** in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight.

⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and **at home** with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are **at home** or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO II CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 5:

1. In what ways is our current body like a tent, and how will our new resurrection body be like a house?
2. What does vs. 4 say to those who teach that our eternal destiny involves being a bodyless spirit?
3. In vs. 5, what does it mean to say that the Holy Spirit is a guarantee?
4. What do vss. 14 and 15 mean for your life?
5. In vs. 17 the phrase “in Christ” means one who has been joined to Jesus in baptism. So, God says that you are a new creation. What does that mean for daily life?

THE GOSPEL: Mark 4:26-34 The rule of God is growing

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

³⁰And he said, “With what can we compare **the kingdom of God**, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a

grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet 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.”

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

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO MARK, CHAPTER 4:

1. The “kingdom of God” refers not to a specific place, but instead to the rule and reign of God. What are some things that Jesus teaches us about God’s rule in these two parables about plants growing?
2. Can you see why the Ezekiel text was chosen to go with the Mark 4 reading?
3. Vs. 34: Why do you think Jesus taught the crowds using parables, but explained everything only to His closest followers?