

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God,
you are full of power
and might and we are small
and not very strong.
Give us a share
in your power,
so that like a small seed,
your family may grow
all over the world
and more and more people
come to know about you
and Jesus, your Son,
who lives with you
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Both readings focus on the final, glorious coming of the reign of God. In the first reading, the "little branch" which God will take from a tall cedar represents the remnant, the small group of Israelites who have remained faithful throughout the exile. But small though it may be, from it will come a "strong and beautiful tree. . . where all kinds of birds will build their nests." The focus of Ezekiel is that God will bring to glorious manifestation what is *already present* in the small remnant.

The focus of the Gospel is the same. The final glorious reign of God is *already present* in Jesus and in his followers. It is often small and hidden (mustard seed) and is not always easily detected but will one day come to full growth in all its glory and splendor. God will bring to glorious manifestation what is *already present* in Jesus and his followers.

FIRST READING: *Ezekiel 17:22-24*

This is a reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

Our God says,

"I will take a tiny branch
from the very top of a cedar tree,
and I will plant it on a high mountain.
It will become a strong and beautiful tree
and good fruit will grow on its branches.
All kinds of animals will live in its shade,
and birds will build their nests
in its branches.
And all the trees of the fields
will know that I am God.
I make high trees small and small trees high.
I dry up green trees
and make trees that are dried up
bloom again.

"I am God, and I will do what I have said."

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalms 104*

RESPONSE:

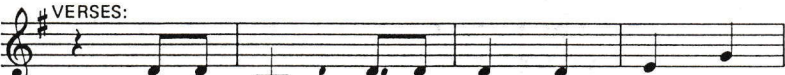


We praise you, O God, all your works are



won-der - ful, won-der - ful are your works.

VERSES:



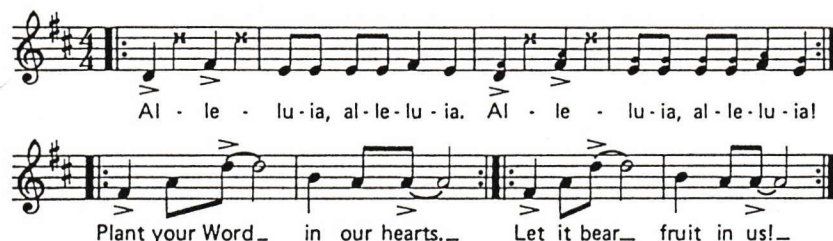
1. It is good to give thanks, to sing your
2. How — won-der - ful are the things you

to Response



1. praise, sing — praise for your ho - ly name!
2. do! All you do for us makes us glad.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: *Mark 4:30-34*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Mark.

Jesus said to his disciples,

“Here is another example
of what the kingdom of God is like:
it is like a mustard seed.
A mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds.
But when it grows, it becomes very large,
and its branches are so big
that birds can come
and make their nests in it
and be protected from the hot sun.”

Jesus always taught the people
by using examples like this
so they would be able to understand.
But whenever Jesus was alone
with the twelve apostles,
he explained everything to them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

The goal of our reflections will be to help the children see that the reign of God is already present among us—but will one day be fully seen. The seed is a good image of this.

Show the children a seed. Ask them what will come of it. Will it be a daisy, a carrot, a pine tree?

Now tell them what kind of seed it is and ask them again what will become of it. If it is a carrot seed, it will become a carrot (not a daisy or a pine tree) because the carrot is already present in the seed, but we cannot see it.

You may wish to use several examples. When the children understand the concept, ask them why Jesus said the “kingdom of God is like a mustard seed.”

- How is the reign (or kingdom) of God already present?

At the beginning of his public teaching, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is here!” He meant that he brought the reign of God to earth. *It* is here among us because *he* is here among us. But sometimes we cannot see it. Why is it sometimes hard to see the reign of God already present among us? When we do not act as Jesus did, others cannot see him (the reign [or kingdom] of God.)

Help the children to understand that when we pray in the Lord’s Prayer “thy kingdom come,” we pray that it will be seen.

How can we help that seed—the kingdom of God—to grow and to be seen by others? How will others see the fact that the reign of God is already here among us?

It is important that the reflections end positively. Our concentration should not be on how we *hinder* the reign of God, but how we *help* reveal it.

Eleventh Sunday of the Year

The kingdom of God

INTRODUCTION

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a little mustard seed, which grows from a tiny beginning into something great.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and read this prayer:

At baptism, we are given
the light of Christ's love
which burns in our hearts.

As children of the light,
may our goodness shine out for others to see,
so that they, too, will feel
the warmth of God's love
and become part of his kingdom.

SORRY

Let us close our eyes and speak quietly to Jesus in our hearts. (Allow a few moments for quiet reflection.) If we have done anything to make God feel sad or disappointed with us, we ask for his forgiveness as we sing Sorry Song 3.

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia.
Plant your word in our hearts, Lord,
and make it grow.
Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL (MARK 4:30-34)

One day Jesus told this parable to the people: "The kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed. Night and day, the little seed sprouts and grows. No one sees it growing or knows how it happens. One day it becomes a large and leafy shrub and the birds of the air find shelter in its many branches."

Jesus told the people many parables, and later when he was alone with his disciples, he helped them to understand their messages.

DISCUSSION

Can you remember what a parable is? A parable is a short, simple story which Jesus told to explain an important truth or teaching to the people.

In today's parable, Jesus talked about the tiny mustard seed and the way that it grows into a large and sturdy plant, to explain how the kingdom of God can grow. The mustard seed plant and its seeds were a common sight in Israel.

Do you know any small seeds which grow into large plants or trees? (If possible, have some familiar seeds displayed and discuss these with the children, e.g., apple, orange, chestnuts, acorns, or sunflower seeds. Show the children any pictures you can find of what mighty plants these small seeds can become.)

Jesus often talked about the kingdom of God, and in today's parable, he tries to explain more about this kingdom. The kingdom of God is the new way of life that Jesus showed us. To live in this kingdom and be a part of it, means that we live as Jesus taught us. We put the love of God and our neighbor before anything else.

The kingdom of God grows from small beginnings like the tiny mustard seed. The word of God is planted in our hearts, and as we grow in kindness, love, understanding, and forgiveness, we share it with others and in this way God's kingdom grows, too.

ACTIVITY

Copy the illustration and ask each child to link each seed with the plant or tree which it becomes.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come," and so we pray that the kingdom of God will grow in our daily lives as we say together:

Our Father...



Link each seed with the tree
or plant it becomes



Eleventh Sunday of the Year

Focus

A candle and Bible, with cones, sunflower seeds and an apple arranged around them.

Introduction

The kingdom of God is a mystery that began with the coming of the King himself (Jesus) and will be fulfilled in God's kingdom of love and peace in the future. It started as something very small with a handful of faithful followers, but grew to reach out and touch every corner of the earth.

Gloria

Gospel Acclamation

Light the Gospel candle and sing Acclamation 7.

Gospel

A reading from the Gospel of St Mark (4:26-34)

Jesus said to his disciples, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who scatters seed in his field. Hour by hour, through daylight and darkness, the seeds send out shoots and roots, and begin to grow. The man does not know how this all happens, but before long his field is full of crops, and when the harvest is ripe the man begins to reap what he has sown. Or compare the kingdom of heaven to a tiny mustard seed, which becomes one of the largest shrubs, and the birds of the air can find shelter in its many branches.'

Jesus told the people many parables, and later when he was alone with his disciples he helped them to understand what they meant.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Has anyone ever grown some seeds? What happened?
Sunflower seeds can grow into plants 2.5 metres tall.

Can you think of any other small seeds that grow to become large plants or trees?

Nature is full of mysterious and marvellous wonders that we cannot explain. Look at the size of an apple pip or seed, and think about the large tree it can become. (Cut the apple open to reveal the seeds inside.) The giant Sequoia or Redwood trees grow their seeds in hard, woody cones (show examples). They can reach heights of more than 90 metres and weigh as much as 400 elephants! They are the tallest living things on earth!

With which marvels did Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven?

God's kingdom is like a seed sown by a farmer. The farmer plants it in good faith, confidently believing that it will sprout and grow and produce a rich harvest. He might not see it growing before his eyes, and he might not understand how a small, dry seed is transformed into a tall, lush plant, but he simply believes that given time this will happen.

Jesus also compared the kingdom of heaven to a tiny mustard seed. The size of the seed disguises its potential for enormous growth and eventual size. In the same way, whoever would have dared to believe that a carpenter's son from Nazareth, and a handful of loyal and faithful disciples, would succeed in sharing the Gospel that changed our world for ever.

How does God's kingdom grow in our world today?

The kingdom is not a place as we would normally understand the word 'kingdom' to mean. Instead, it describes the relationship between God and people who accept Christ his Son as their King. Followers of Christ (Christians) try to live by his standards of love and forgiveness for all. God's kingdom continues to grow and spread its branches in our world today, through the love and forgiveness we share with one another.

Activity

Give each child a clean yoghurt pot to fill with compost or soil before planting a sunflower seed. Spend some time discussing what their little seed needs if it is to grow healthy and strong and become a tall yellow sunflower.

Intercessions

As brothers and sisters in one loving family, together let us pray to our heavenly Father:

We pray for the Church throughout the world;
may God's kingdom come in our daily lives
as we live Christ's Gospel of love.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for people whose lives are shattered by war or violence; may God's kingdom come through the efforts of those working to bring peace.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the sick and all who suffer; may God's kingdom come through the love and compassion of those who visit and care for them.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the homeless and jobless; may God's kingdom come through our love for one another as we offer help to those in need.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Knowing that our heavenly Father is listening,
in the silence of our hearts
let us share our own unspoken prayers with him.

Silence

Loving Father,
make us grow in love for you and one another,
and give us the courage and strength
to do your will on earth,
so that your kingdom may come.
Grant this through Christ your Son.

Amen.

Jesus told another
parable about the tiny
mustard seed

Can you fit these words into the boxes to complete this poem?

ME

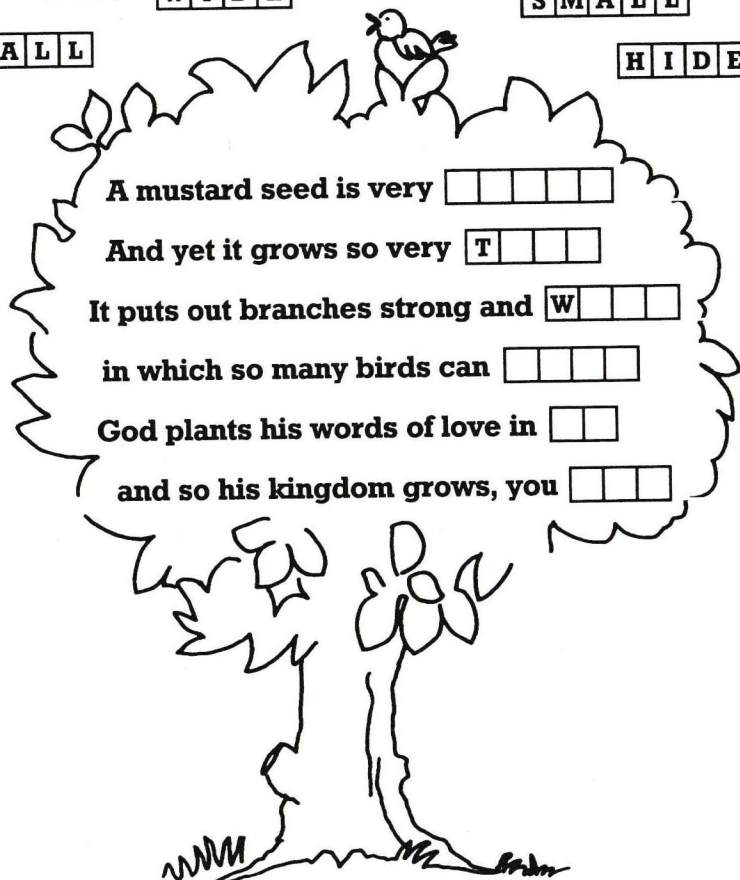
WIDE

SEE

SMALL

TALL

HIDE



Jesus told
a parable about a seed
growing all by itself!

Colour the shapes with a dot to see
what the seed grew into.

