Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

- Mark 4:30-32

FROM A MUSTARD SEED...
Gathering
The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

A house divided against itself cannot stand. Jesus makes this observation in light of charges that he is possessed. He is possessed, not by a demon, but by the Holy Spirit. We who have received the Holy Spirit through baptism have been joined to Christ’s death and resurrection and knit together in the body of Christ. Those with whom we sing and pray this day are sisters and brothers of the Lord. With them we go forth in peace to do the will of God.

The assembly stands.

GATHERING HYMN (ELW p. 824)  This Is My Father’s World

GREETING
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✡ one God,
full of compassion and mercy,
abounding in steadfast love.
Amen.

Trusting God’s promise of forgiveness,
let us confess our sin against God and one another.

Eternal God our creator,
in you we live and move and have our being.
Look upon us, your children,
the work of your hands.
Forgive us all our offenses,
and cleanse us from proud thoughts and empty desires.
By your grace draw us near to you,
our refuge and our strength;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Since we are justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
God’s love has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit given to us.
In the mercy of almighty God,
Christ died for us while we still were sinners;
and for his sake, God ✡ forgives you all your sins.
Amen.
LITANY FOR REFUGEES

Mighty Lord, as you guided the Israelites, through the wilderness, be a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day for refugees in search of new hope and new life.

As you brought the Israelites out of bondage to freedom, bring refugees out of persecution to safety.

As you protected the Israelites through 40 years in the desert, protect those who languish for years in refugee camps.

Wipe away their tears of sorrow that their mourning may give way to joyous hope.

Put an end to warfare and tyranny, that some may return home without fear of violence.

Open the doors of safer nations, that some may find new homes in new lands.

Rebuild their lives, that they might enjoy the fruit of labors in peace.

Restore their material goods, that they might sustain their families in prosperity.

Revive their hope, that they might face a future with promise.

Shine your grace upon them, that they might know your love

Strengthen their bonds of friendship and family, that they might serve one another with encouraging love.

And inspire your churches to welcome the stranger, that together we might build communities of hope where strangers become neighbors and friends, and brothers and sisters. Amen.
PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.  O God, you are the tree of life, offering shelter to all the world. Graft us into yourself and nurture our growth, that we may bear your truth and love to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Oremos. Oh Dios, eres el árbol de la vida ofreciendo refugio a todo el mundo. Injertarnos en ti mismo y nutrir nuestro crecimiento, para que podamos llevar tu verdad y amor a los necesitados, a través de Jesucristo, nuestro Salvador y Señor. amén.

The assembly is seated.
**Word**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

**FIRST READING:** Ezekiel 17:22-24

*Tree imagery is used in a messianic prophecy to tell how the Lord will choose someone from Judah’s royal family (the cedar tree) to reign over all creation. This tree will be planted on Mount Zion, the location of the holy temple.*

22 Thus says the Lord God:
   I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar;
   I will set it out.
I will break off a tender one
   from the topmost of its young twigs;
I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.

23 On the mountain height of Israel
   I will plant it,
in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar.
Under it every kind of bird will live;
in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.

24 All the trees of the field shall know
   that I am the Lord.
I bring low the high tree,
   I make high the low tree;
I dry up the green tree
   and make the dry tree flourish.
I the Lord have spoken; I will accomplish it.

Word of God, word of life.

*Thanks be to God.*

**RESPONSIVE READING:** Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15

R: *The righteous shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.*

1 It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praise to your name, O Most High;
2 **to herald your love in the morning**
   and your faithfulness at night;
3 on the psaltery, and on the lyre,
   and to the melody of the harp.
4 **For you have made me glad by your acts, O Lord;**
   and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands. R

12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
   and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.
13 **Those who are planted in the house of the Lord**
   shall flourish in the courts of our God;
14 they shall still bear fruit in old age;
   they shall be green and succulent;
15 **that they may show how upright the Lord is,**
   my rock, in whom there is no injustice. R
Paul encourages believers to live by faith and not by sight. We do not consider Jesus from a human perspective but through the eyes of faith, believing he died for all and was raised. All who are in Christ are now in God’s new creation.

So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—

for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.
Glory to You, O Lord!

Jesus frequently uses parables to teach ordinary people as they are able to hear and understand. Images of sowing and growing show the vitality of God’s kingdom.

26 [Jesus] said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

30 He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth 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 except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ!

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY 
(ELW p. 597)  My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.
PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Filled with the Holy Spirit, we join with the church in every place, praying for the world that God so loves.

Lifting our voices and turning toward God, let us pray for the church, the earth, and all who are in need. Mighty Lord, as you guided the Israelites, through the wilderness and out of bondage to freedom, be a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day for refugees in search of new hope and new life and bring them out of persecution to safety. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

As you protected the Israelites through 40 years in the desert, protect those who languish for years in refugee housing and camps, detention centers, and around the world. Help refugee families through their times of trial and grant them safety and glad reunions with their families who are waiting to receive them. We pray especially for refugees known to us: Moma Ndeh, David Anaba, and Sadat. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Today we remember the fragmented families and traumatized young and teenage children that live in the juvenile and family residential centers and are separated from their loved ones, unable to join families awaiting them here in the United States, and awakened hourly through the night. Shine your grace upon them, that they might be sustained by your love and move quickly from persecution to safety, hope, and a dignified life in the care of loving family and friends. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Inspire our churches and community to care, assist and advocate for the refugee families. Most especially, inspire our government officials to take action to remove darkness from families and our community and find ways to bring light to the community, state and country. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord God, your compassion continually reaches into the lives of your people. Visit with loving-kindness those experiencing afflictions of any kind, especially Elvira, Bobby, Alex, James, Lorain, Pauline, Pastor Tom, Roxanne, Shane, Linda, Norma, Ann, Laquita, Helen, Linda, Jack, Michael, Raymond, Alva, Steve, Evalina, Francis, Barbara, Ella, Khloe, Kenneth, Jim, Charles, Eddie, Pastor Wally, Yvonne, Anyemarie, Mark, Mary Ruth, Kyle, Cody, and Norma, as well as those that we name out loud or in our hearts... Renew all of us and prepare us for glory so that we do not lose heart. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord God, more than those who watch for the morning, our souls wait and watch for you. In the coming months of summer, help us to be refreshed and at play, watching and waiting for you at every turn. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

O God, giver and sustainer of life, in this time of need send us the gift of rain, so that we may receive the fruits of the earth for our benefit and for your praise. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You bless us with opportunities to learn and share your Word and your love. Lead the Youth of St. Paul’s and their sponsors as they prepare to attend the 2018 Youth Gathering in Houston. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

As we sow Seeds of Hope, we pray for St. John Lutheran in Westhoff. Guide them to new opportunities and abilities to draw younger people into the congregation. We pray also for St. Peter’s in Elgin that they may have vision, direction, and that God would use them as an instrument of grace in their community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

By the sure guidance of your Holy Spirit, O God, we lift up our prayers in trust and thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you

Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

The assembly stands.

OFFERING HYMN (ELW p. 186) Create in Me a Clean Heart

OFFERING PRAYER

Merciful God, you open wide your hand and satisfy the need of every living thing. You have set this feast before us. Open our hands to receive it. Open our hearts to embrace it. Open our lives to live it. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.


GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.
It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God. You reveal your glory as the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, one Lord, one God, ever to be adored in your eternal glory. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:
In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Christ has died. Christ is ris-en. Christ will come a - gain.

A - men, a - men, a - men.
LORD’S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come, let us eat, for now the feast is spread.

The assembly is seated.

DISTRIBUTION – All are WELCOME at the table of the Lord.

This meal gives you strength for your journey of faith & life. Go forward as the body of Christ in your family, community and the world. Children or anyone choosing not to commune, but wishing to be blessed, may indicate this by folding their arms across their chest. Anyone who is unable to come forward may indicate to an usher that you wish to receive communion where you are seated.

Following Communion, the assembly stands.
PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Jesus Christ, host of this meal, you have given us not only this bread and cup, but your very self, that we may feast on your great love. Filled again by these signs of your grace, may we hunger for your reign of justice, may we thirst for your way of peace, for you are Lord forevermore.
Amen.

Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

May God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, grant you the gifts of faith and hope. Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN  (ELW p. 812)  Faith of Our Fathers

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. The Spirit sends us forth to serve.
Thanks be to God.

DOXOLOGY  (ELW p. 884)  Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

Welcome!

We have all come to St. Paul’s by different paths, and from various walks of life. Through worship, study, prayer and fellowship we each seek to deepen our faith, comfort and encourage one another and dedicate our lives more fully to sharing Christ in our homes, our community and the world. All are welcome at St. Paul’s. We are eager to know you, and we invite you to get to know us.

If you are unable to hear, require a bulletin, or need any other assistance, please signal an usher.
For Prayerful Consideration


*For those in the military:* Nick Adams, Allen Bowles, Justin Chandler, Justin Elkins, Rodney Foreman, Jamaica Goodhue, Jacob Jones, Felipe Leal, Jr., Garrett Peterson, Jon Wayne Schulz, James Skinner, Chris Sustaita, Kassie Thompson, John Vasquez, and Delmiro Villanueva.

*Anniversary:* Ricky & Elizabeth Witte (June 19), Robert & Betty Busselman (June 20)

*Today we welcome Dr. Andrew Benko* to our pulpit. Dr. Benko is an Episcopal priest from New Orleans, Louisiana. He graduated from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in 2005, and has served churches in St. Louis, Shreveport, and Fort Worth. Recently, he completed his Ph.D in New Testament from Brite Divinity School, where he wrote his dissertation on “Race in the Gospel of John.”

*TODAY: A Congregational Meeting* will be held immediately following the worship service. Council is seeking approval for the use of available funds to replace both HVAC units. In 2017, the congregation approved funds for the replacement of one HVAC unit. It has been determined that both units require replacement.

**ST. PAUL’S YOUTH WILL BE ATTENDING THE 2018 YOUTH GATHERING IN HOUSTON** JUNE 27 – JULY 1
They will be accepting donations over the next few Sunday’s. The donations will go toward the In-Kind Offering to buy books for The 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering Houston Literacy Campaign and to help with travel expenses. Donation envelopes are on the table at the rear of the sanctuary. Please write your check payable to: St. Paul’s Lutheran Youth Group. They are asking for your prayers as they prepare for this gathering. Thank you for all your support!

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Who are some of the refugees?

1. Sonia and Julia are sisters who were recently apprehended at the U.S. border. They fled their home country of Honduras after receiving death threats from an uncle. Sonia has a mental disability. Julia witnessed the sexual abuse of Sonia by a family member. Julia told her aunt about the sexual abuse. When the aunt asked her husband to leave the home, he became enraged and threatened to kill them all. Due to the lack of trust in the justice system, the aunt decided it was safest to take the girls far away. The next day, the aunt fled with the girls to the U.S. where their mother was living. The girls are currently in transitional foster care, working on reunification with their mother. They are also in the process of getting legal assessment regarding a potential special immigrant juvenile visa or asylum.

2. Lidia is a Guatemalan mother who worked at Tecum Uman near a border station selling food. Her niece, Elena, who helped her in the business, suddenly disappeared. Lidia was able to locate her in Chiapas and learned that Elena had been forced into a brothel by a gang. She tried to talk with her but was prevented from having any contact. She decided to report the kidnapping and trafficking to the prosecutor’s office, but instead of arresting the perpetrators, they arrested Lidia and charged her with trafficking! Unable to read, she was tricked into signing a confession by the prosecutor by saying that she was signing papers for her niece’s release. She was convicted on the confession and false testimony and sentenced to 13 years. After being incarcerated for five years, pressure from her community made the judge release her from prison. She has not seen nor heard from her niece.

3. Moma, is a young attorney from Cameroon. He is studying law at St. Mary’s University so he can become licensed to practice in the US. Christ Lutheran in San Antonio is an accompaniment organization for Moma. Last week Moma’s family fled their refugee camp in Nigeria when French speaking government forces began raiding (killing or arresting) all English speaking refugees. His family is now living in the jungle, once again afraid for their lives. 36 English-speaking people have been killed by government forces in Moma’s old neighborhood in the last two weeks...their crime: they spoke English.

4. David was born and raised in Ghana. He sought refuge in the U.S. because of the extreme danger of gangland murders. David was held in refugee detention in Pearsall and then deported to Ghana two months ago. He is living in hiding while he tries to make arrangements to flee to Ecuador.

5. Sadat is also from Ghana. He, too, sought safety in the U.S. He has been in refugee detention in Pearsall for almost two years. He is currently scheduled for a deportation hearing. If Sadat is returned to Ghana, he has learned that the same gangs he escaped will be waiting at the airport to kill him.

WELCOME WITH LIRS!

Today, for the first time since World War II, there are more than 60 million people around the world who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, violence, and persecution. Yet Lutherans are not discouraged. We continue to meet refugees and those displaced by violence with God's love. You can mail a donation to: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Box 17467 Baltimore, MD 21297-1467

"We who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us.”
Hebrews 13:19