

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
16th June Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 507 564 267 79 293 511

INTROIT: Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of wicked people, stand in the path of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers!

Rather, his delight is in the Instruction of the LORD, and on His Instruction he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted beside streams of water, which produces its fruit in its season and has leaves that do not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

The ungodly are not like that but are like the chaff that the wind blows away.

Therefore, wicked people will not stand in the judgment or sinners in the assembly of righteous people.

For the LORD knows the way of righteous people, but the way of wicked people will perish.

COLLECT: Blessed Lord, since You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com. Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

READINGS: Ezekiel 17:22-24 God's promise of hope.
2 Corinthians 5:1-17 The love of Christ compels us.
Mark 4:26-34 The growing seed and the mustard seed.

Ezekiel 17:22-24

²² This is what the Lord GOD has said: "I Myself shall take one of the highest sprigs of a cedar-tree and set it out. I shall pluck off one of the topmost of its tender twigs and I Myself shall plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ I shall

plant it on the mountain-height of Israel. It will send out branches, produce fruit and become a magnificent cedar-tree. Every **bird**, every winged creature, will **live** under it. They will **live in the shade of its branches**.²⁴ Then all the trees in the field will know that I am the LORD and that I have brought the high tree down low. I have made the low tree grow high. I have made the fresh tree wither and have caused the dry tree to sprout. I am the LORD. I have spoken, and I shall do it.”

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (11-17)

¹ For we know that, if the earthly tent in which we live is demolished, we have a house from God, not made by human hands, eternal in heaven. ² To be sure, in this dwelling we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling that is from heaven, ³ since, after we have put it on, we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we, who are in this tent, groan as we are weighed down, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to put on the additional clothing, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ God is the One who has prepared us for this very thing and who has given us the Spirit as the guarantee. ⁶ Therefore, we are always confident. We know that, while we are at home in this body, we are in a strange land, away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident and even prefer to move out of the body and to be at home with the Lord. ⁹ Now, whether we are at home or in a strange land, we aspire to please Him. ¹⁰ We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or bad.

¹¹ Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people. God already knows what we are like, and I hope that this has also become plain to your consciences. ¹² We are not recommending ourselves to you again but are giving you an opportunity to boast about us. We are doing this that you may answer those who boast about what is outward rather than about what is in the heart. ¹³ For, if we are out of our minds, it is for God. If our minds are sound, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that One has died for all. Therefore, all have died. ¹⁵ He has died for all, that those who live may no longer live for themselves but for Him, who has died for them and has been raised. ¹⁶ Therefore, from now on we do not regard anyone from a human point of view. Although we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, yet now we no longer regard Him in this way. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Look! They have become new!

Mark 4:26-34

²⁶ Then He said: “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and should sleep and get up, by night and by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, although he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the ground produces grain, first the green blade, then the head and then the full wheat in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ready, he **puts in the sickle, because harvest has come.**”

³⁰ Then He asked, “To what are we to compare the kingdom of God or with what parable are we to present it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when it is sown on the ground, is a very small seed among all the seeds on earth. ³² Nevertheless, when it is sown, it comes up and becomes the largest of all the garden plants. It produces large branches, so that **the birds of the sky can make their dwelling under its shade.**”

³³ He used many parables like these to speak the Word to them, as they could hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without using a parable. However, in private He used to explain everything fully to His disciples.

THE LORD SCATTERS THE SEED Sermon for the 4th Sunday after Pentecost 2024 Mark 4:26-34

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before Mark 4:26-34:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

People all over the world know how seeds work. First, they know that trees, fruits, or crops will grow if a good seed is planted. They also understand that mankind cannot make a seed germinate and mature; that is, mankind cannot get into the ground to manipulate and force the seed to develop and sprout. They understand that when a seed is planted, a farmer must wait patiently to harvest the crop.

This common knowledge about seeds and farming helps us understand Jesus’ parable in today’s Gospel reading, which forms the basis of our text.

Mark writes how Jesus “**used many parables... to speak the Word to them, as they could hear it.**” We have another parable given today. In summary, in this parable, the good seed is the Word of God. The person sowing and planting the seed is the Lord. The ground and earth are those living under God’s reign and rule. Therefore, Jesus is attempting to grant us faith and encouragement that the Word of God is powerful.

The Word of God is planted in people’s lives through preaching. This preached Word has the power to not only convert sinners but also cause us to live a Christian life. It is cast out into the world from pulpits and lecterns. It is cast out into the ears, into the minds, and the souls of people just like you and me. And through this powerful seed - the Word of God proclaimed - faith, forgiveness, life, and salvation are created and take root.

Often, however, we are rather *impatient* with seeds taking root. We are like impatient children. The day after wheat seed is planted, we expect to see growth poking through the soil. While the Lord says, “**All by itself the ground produces grain, first the green blade, then the head and then the full wheat in the head,**” this takes time. The full head of wheat doesn’t grow overnight.

Why are we often impatient, not only when it comes to seed but in general? It is because we are surrounded by a culture that expects instantaneous results. With hyper-speed technology, modern commercialism, fast-food restaurants, and advancements in travelling, we have come to expect things instantly. We really don’t have to wait for anything anymore. Everything is at our fingertips. This impatience also finds its way into the church, creating tremendous problems.

As Christians, we acknowledge that it is good when the Word of God is preached into hearts and lives - that the Gospel seed is cast into the soils of ears, hearts, and minds where it “**should sprout and grow.**” However, like impatient children, we want to see things happen *immediately.* Pastors often feel discouraged when they do not see the immediate fruits of their proclamation of the Word. Parishioners get frustrated when the pews don’t fill up; they want to see their small congregations grow overnight.

Indeed, as the church, we all agree that planting seeds - that is to say, proclaiming the Word of God - is noble and good. Seeing the ultimate end of a fruitful crop - that is to say, new converts and full pews - is also gratifying. However, waiting and trusting that the Gospel seed will germinate and grow is the difficult part. It is difficult to wait and trust that the Gospel seed does the work “**all by itself.**”

Because we expect immediate results, our impatience does not speed up seed growth but *hinders it*. When our impatience drives us crazy, we may be tempted to believe we must help the Word of God along. This may sound noble. However, in doing so, we typically uproot the seed, make a mess of things, *and ruin everything*.

We see this typically happening in those churches today that implement business principles, strategic goals, and so on. They will have ‘worship teams’ set up within the church, focusing on various programs. These churches will use loud bands in their church, set up coffee houses in the back of the church, give away free food, create target markets for evangelism, and so on and on and on, hoping to grow the church. Simply preaching the Word is not enough – the Gospel needs help. These churches are impatient, so the only way to guarantee results is to help God *by moving things along*.

Attempting to help the Gospel seed along is no guarantee of growth, no matter how good our intentions are. In fact, history and the Scriptures have shown us that the more we press ourselves to work harder, the greater the danger becomes that we think *our work is what matters most* as if the Kingdom depends **on us**. In blunt terms, we in the church can sometimes get so focused on the end results of the fruit and matured crops that we actually neglect the planting of the seed in the first place. We get so focused on programs, gimmicks, strategies, and plans that we either forget the Word of God altogether or drown and smother the Word *with all sorts of meaningless stuff*.

Dear friends, if you and I are concerned about good fruit and crops, then we must concern ourselves with good seed. And in considering good seed, we hear from the Gospel reading today that the good seed is powerful. It’s like “**a mustard seed, which, when it is sown on the ground, is a very small seed among all the seeds on earth.** ³² **Nevertheless, when it is sown, it comes up and becomes the largest of all the garden plants. It produces large branches, so that the birds of the sky can make their dwelling under its shade.**” It is ‘all’ about the good seed of the Word of God! As the mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds usually planted, becomes the largest of all garden plants, sometimes reaching a height of three metres, large enough for birds to perch in its shade, so the Gospel has extraordinary power and vitality. In other words, Jesus illustrates in our Gospel reading from today that it is the Lord who does the work of converting, sustaining, and growing His church, and the Lord does His work ‘through’ His powerful proclaimed Word - this seed that is planted into hearts, minds, and souls. It does not depend on you and my efforts and additions. It is all

about the Word of God - this powerful seed. It is as Martin Luther once preached: *“I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything. ... I let the Word do its work. What do you suppose is Satan’s thought when one tries to do the thing by kicking up a row, by trying to help the Word along through human effort? He sits back in hell and thinks: ‘Oh, what a fine game the poor fools are up to now!’ But when we spread the Word alone and let it alone do the work, that distresses him. For it is almighty, and takes captive the hearts...”* (Luther’s Works, Volume 51).

This means that Jesus gives us the comforting assurance that responsibility for the Kingdom’s growth does not rest on our shoulders. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to supervise the scattering of the seed that is the Word of God. Perhaps He will give you the privilege of scattering the Word of God by confessing your faith to your family, friends, or associates. Perhaps He will work in some other way to scatter the Word of God. The point is that the Holy Spirit will see to the scattering of the Word of God, and He will attend to the growth. The growth will not come as the product of our efforts and skills. The Lord of the harvest is in control. There’s no need to worry.

It is God’s Word, not ours. The Lord is the one who converts souls and grows the church. He uses us when and where He pleases to proclaim and plant the Gospel seed. He softens hearts and uses us to make disciples of the nations by baptising and teaching. Through these, we confess this Gospel, knowing that the Gospel does the work when and where it pleases the Lord. It will not return void.

Therefore, be confident. It is about the Holy Spirit through the sure Word of God, the Word that has called you, granted you faith, enlightened you, sanctified you, and kept you in the true faith. You are forgiven all of your sins for Christ’s sake.

Do not let the gimmicks of mankind tickle your ears; it is about the Word of God proclaimed by the church and the Sacraments administered, in season and out of season. Stand firm, for it is about the Word of God proclaimed whether it is popular or not, whether politically incorrect or not. Take comfort; it is all about the Word of God - for you and for the world. The powerful Word will not wither or fade but will produce **“large branches so that the birds of the sky can make their dwelling under its shade.”** It will stand forever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord our God, You are our strength and our joy, for everything You do is marked by kindness and love. Because You are gracious, we trust in You and offer You our prayers.

We thank and praise You for all Your kindness to us: for blessing us with life, for equipping us with all our powers of body and soul, for giving us the ability to be useful, for permitting us to enjoy Your creation, and for surrounding us with the warmth of human relationships in every facet of life.

We confess our sins before You, repent of them, and earnestly turn from them. Do not look on us in anger, for Jesus' sake. We praise You above all else for Your grace in Christ Jesus. You have sent Your Son to die on the cross, and have raised Him in power and glory, to provide all the riches of our salvation. In Him You have given us free pardon for all our sins, the strength to overcome evil, and the sure hope of eternal life.

We rejoice in the death of Your Son, through which you have been reconciled to us, so that we may approach You as a God of love. Comfort us with Your free forgiveness, and fill us with the new life of the Spirit. Help us to be alert and to stand firm in faith in every temptation and test, so that we may resist Satan and His evil tricks, and hold our ground against all evil.

Be gracious to Your Church, O God, that it may seek the lost, lift up the fallen, comfort the broken-hearted, and heal the afflicted. Enable Your pastors and people to proclaim with courage and conviction the message of life in Christ Jesus, and to declare to all people Your mighty acts of judgment and mercy. Cause growth among us, through Your powerful Word.

Reveal Your power to all lands and nations. Remind people everywhere that You are the Lord of all history, that You judge the leaders of the nations, and that You have the power to break bows, shatter spears, and destroy all human might. Grant that all people may turn to You and follow Your truth.

Be the heavenly guest in all our homes. Move all families to trust You in everything, and to love and serve each other, until that day comes when You call us from our homes on earth to live with You in our heavenly home for ever.

Bless all who are in any need of body or soul. Teach them to humble themselves under Your mighty hand, trusting that You remove all burdens in Your own good time. Teach them to place all their worries on You, and assure them of Your infinite understanding and loving care.

Gracious God, since You have called us to share eternal glory in Christ, make us strong, and make our lives holy. Hear our prayers for the sake of Jesus, to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: Are You Good Enough?

What do you need to do, to get to heaven? Let me repeat that one more time.
What do you need to do, to get to heaven?

When asked this question, the average person may respond that they need to do religious and good things, like praying, volunteering, and trying to be an overall positive person - definitely doing more good than bad. By praying, volunteering, and being a positive person, they qualify themselves for the pearly gates.

While this definitely sounds like a reasonable response, what typically is not clarified in peoples' answers is to what degree a person should pray, volunteer, and strive to be a positive person. In other words, what typically is not specified is how much a person should pray, volunteer, and be positive.

You see, we have it figured out that for a person to obtain eternal life, they have to be good. And if a person is bad, they do not get to heaven but are disqualified to hell. But here is the catch: we typically are hesitant to define just how much good and for how long the good needs to be done to qualify oneself for eternal life. We are a little gun-shy about defining how much and how long goodness must be done to obtain eternal life. We typically like to keep this part vague or grade everyone on a curve because we like to grade ourselves on a curve.

And so, as long as we can come up with enough good things in our lives and the lives of those around us, we can conclude that eternal life is within our grasp.

A problem arises, though, when we read of the Parable of the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10**. From this parable, we are told that for a person to inherit eternal life, they must love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, strength, and neighbour as themselves. Indeed, eternal life is possible when you set God above everything else and let go of all your thoughts, words, works, knowledge, and insights. Yes, if you commit to God's will in all that you have in body and soul and flesh and spirit, in all that you are, with all of your strength, health, and senses, you will obtain eternal life.

Keep in mind that this is easier said than done. This is not a partial calling to love God and neighbour with a half-hearted attitude. Obtaining eternal life is something one does with everything - everything a person has!

This looks like this: to obtain eternal life, love should spread throughout your whole body and your whole being into every part of you. From head to foot, inside and outside, all that you do should be captivated by love. No hate, no resentment, no grumbling, no apathy, and no frowning are allowed. If you are to inherit eternal life by what you do, you are to love and delight in God completely, never be annoyed to go to church, read your Bible, and never rush to study the catechism. And regarding your neighbour, you should not see anything indecent in him. You should always put the best construction on your neighbour, never giving in to gossip. Your mouths should not speak any evil, and your hands and feet must be innocent, too, only going the way of goodness. In short, all of your thoughts must be clean. All of your deeds must be kind. All of your words must be pure and uplifting. Even your ears must filter out the negative and only hear the best construction about your neighbour. And get this: you should desire to die a thousand times over than anger God with just one sin.

So, how are you doing? Have you done enough? Have you loved enough? Have you given enough? Has love permeated your whole being completely?

If you think you have done enough to inherit eternal life, you are actually lying. You are severely deceived if you think you have done enough and somehow racked up enough brownie points before God. You see, when we look at the Ten Commandments, we not only see what we should do but quickly learn of our weakness - we learn that we do not do what we ought to do before God and our neighbour. We learn what love looks like and that we fail to love God and our neighbour properly.

And so, we are very much in the same boat as the Priest and the Levite in that Parable of the Good Samaritan. The Priest and Levite saw a poor, half-dead fellow on the side of the road and did nothing for him because they had neither love for God or their neighbour. Tragically, they understood the man on the edge of the road was in trouble, but walked by without love.

Truth be told, though, we are probably much closer to that poor man on the side of the road than the Priest and Levite. When God's Ten Commandments do their work on us, they reveal that we do not love the way we ought to, like the Priest and Levite. However, the Law does something more. It shows us just how dark and depraved our sinful nature runs through us. The Law helps us see that we have been beaten up by our sin and left half-dead in the ditch

of life. Indeed, the Law shows us that we are not where we should be. The Law shows us our sins, reveals our sickness, and makes us aware of our misery. And so, the Law helps us understand that we cannot do anything to inherit eternal life. In fact, the Law helps us realise that the only thing we have earned is damnation.

God's good and true Law cannot help us out of the ditch of our sin, restore us, or heal us. The Law only diagnoses our problem, which is why we need something more - a Good Samaritan, a good neighbour to rescue us.

Consider the parable again. The Good Samaritan came and had compassion on the half-dead man. He came to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He then set him on his animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, he paid the innkeeper to look after the wounded man. This is our Jesus!

Like the Samaritan, Jesus came down to you, your lost and dying condition, so that He might pour the oil and wine of the Sacraments upon you! Indeed, Jesus placed you not on an animal to carry you to an inn, but He set your sins upon Himself to give you forgiveness, life, and salvation. And like the Samaritan who brought the man to an inn, Jesus has brought you to the Church and given His Word to be that medicine of forgiveness that is continuously delivered to you, restoring you unto salvation.

Jesus is that perfect neighbour; He did not pass you by on His road to the cross. But being full of love, He scooped you up unto Himself.

And so, we see that the Law shows you and me our lack of love. It shows us that we cannot do anything to inherit eternal life. However, the Gospel shows you and me our Good Samaritan - Jesus Christ - who did everything for you so that you might inherit eternal life. Yes, daily, the Law will remind us of our inability to properly love and our failure to acquire eternal life by our reason and strength. But the Gospel... Yes, the Gospel continually declares to us that we do have a Good Samaritan who has loved us and, out of joy, given us His kingdom!

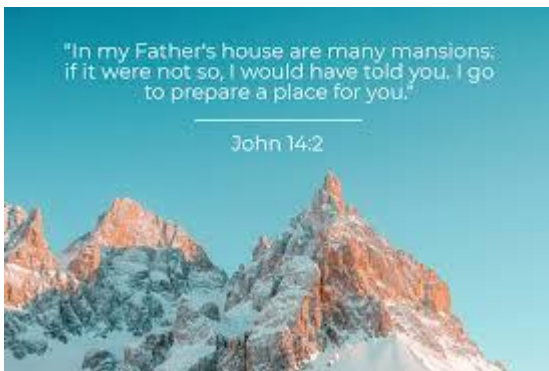
Children's Message:

I want you to imagine what the best place to live would look like. It would be a place that makes you happy, and you would always want to live there.

Imagine a place where there are dangerous animals, mean people, violent storms, temptations, sickness, and fighting. Wouldn't that be a wonderful place to live? Is there such a place? Where could it be?

Well, as you know, Jesus' death on the cross was to take away our sin - because there can't be any sin in this best place to live - and then He rose and ascended back to heaven to get it ready for us. But one day, Jesus is coming back, and He will give us that very place to live that's just perfect, with all good things and none of those bad things in it. We know this because He came back from the dead on Easter morning. He didn't get hurt again or have mean people hit Him anymore or be in a dangerous spot anymore. Where is this place? Heaven of course! In our Second Reading today, the Apostle Paul says, "*We have a house from God, not made by human hands, eternal in heaven*" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Jesus suffered all sorts of things for us, but He promises that one day we shall be with Him in the best place ever - where no bad things will ever happen again. You won't get hurt or be in danger or have someone pick on you or ever get scared or do anything wrong.



Everyone will get along, and it will be the best place ever. Lots of artists like to draw pictures of heaven, but we really don't know what it will look like until we get there! But what we do know is that it's going to be beautiful. We also don't know when we'll be there. It could be tomorrow. It could be when you are all grown up. It could be a hundred years from now. But one day Jesus will come back, and He will give us the best place ever to live. Jesus is so wonderful to make that happen for us!

Thank You, Jesus, for preparing a place for me in Your kingdom. When You are ready, please come and take me to be with You forever. Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

23 June 5 Pentecost	30 June 6 Pentecost	7 July 7 Pentecost
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.30am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 23 June		
READINGS: Job 38:1-11; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41		
HYMNS: 147 524 865 (54 842) 616		
Sunday, 30 June		
READINGS: Lamentations 3:22-33; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-15; Mark 5:21-43		
HYMNS: 462 68 368 (416 330) 427		
Sunday, 7 July		
READINGS: Ezekiel 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10; Mark 6:1-13		
HYMNS: 498 217 375 (150 847) 457		

Saturday, 22 June, 7:00pm. YAY (Young Adults and Youth) is on at Aubigny. All young adults and youth are invited to attend. Please bring your Bible and something for supper. The hall will be open for games and socialising from 6:30pm.

BIBLE STUDIES for JUNE:

Wednesday 19 June, 7.30pm at Greenwood.

Thursday 20 June, 10.00am at Lowood.

Sunday 23 June, after service at Marburg (please bring a shared morning tea).

Friday 28 June, 7.30pm Oak/Aub at Oakey.

The cost of the LSB hymnbooks will be \$70.00 for either edition (regular, soft cover, or larger hardcover). Each congregation is responsible for its own orders, so those who have placed orders, please give your money to your treasurer, who will then let pastor know how many to order.