



Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Green

'What is God's kingdom like?'

Ezekiel 17: 22-24 Psalm 92 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10 Mark 4: 30-34



The seed in today's parable does not rely on a gardener's constant attention – it is quite capable of growing wonderfully on its own, simply because it is a living seed. Whenever we sow the seed of God's love or God's Word in someone's heart, God will continue the work of growth there, using all the circumstances of that person's experience to develop the growing.

Leader's Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration, begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, starting with the Gospel. (You may choose to use or focus on one reading only, but remember that the Gospel may not be omitted.) Then look through the preparatory material that follows and familiarise yourself with the Liturgy Outline.

GOSPEL

Mark 4:30-34

Jesus said: "What is God's Kingdom like? What story can I use to explain it? It is like what happens when a mustard seed is planted in the ground. It is the smallest seed in all the world. But once it is planted, it grows larger than any garden plant. It even puts out branches that are big enough for birds to rest in its shade."

Jesus used many other stories when he spoke to people, and he taught them as much as they could understand. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 17:22-24

The Lord God said: "I will cut a tender twig from the very top of a cedar tree and plant it on the peak of a tall mountain. I will plant it on the highest mountain in Israel. It will put out branches and grow into a beautiful and useful cedar tree. All kinds of birds will find shelter under it and shade in its branches.

Every tree in the forest will know that I, the Lord, bring down tall trees and make short trees grow tall. I dry up green trees and make dried trees turn green again. I, the Lord, have spoken! And I will keep my word."

PSALM

Psalm 92

Response: **Lord it is good to give thanks to you**
 or Alleluia!

It is wonderful to be grateful and to sing your praises, Lord Most High!

It is wonderful each morning to tell about your love and at night to announce how faithful you are. **R**

Good people will prosper like palm trees, and they will grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon. They will take root in your house, Lord God, and they will do well. **R**

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Brother and sisters:

Always be cheerful! As long as we are in these bodies, we are away from the Lord. But we live by faith, not by what we see.

We should be cheerful, because we would rather leave these bodies and be at home with the Lord. But whether we are at home with the Lord or away from him, we still do our best to please him. After all, Christ will judge each of us for the good or the bad that we do while living in these bodies.

Scriptures from the Lectionary for Masses with Children (CEV)
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Background to the Readings for Leaders

Today's readings grew out of situations of hopelessness where it was felt that God didn't seem to be winning. They call for trust in the God of history who is at work in human hearts even when the results cannot be perceived. Ezekiel's parable dates from when Jerusalem has been overrun by the Babylonians and the leaders of the people taken into exile. (A great eagle - Babylon - breaks off the top branch of the cedar - the royal house of Judah - and carries it away.) The nations seem to have no future. The prophet moves on to a vision of hope - from the top of the cedar (the royal house) God will take a shoot and transplant it in Israel. From it will grow a new tree providing shelter for every kind of bird. In the Second Reading Paul too is writing from a situation of weakness - in prison possibly under the sentence of death, relations are strained with the community he helped to found in Corinth - he is unsure if his work will go on and not sure how long he has to live. He speaks of hope "We are always full of confidence... after all, this is a life of exile; "home" is with the Lord."

The Gospel passage seems to be a response to those who are discouraged that nothing seems to be happening. (Could such small beginnings really be the germ of a kingdom?) The image of the growing seed emphasises the helpless role of the farmer - the forces of nature work away quietly and mysteriously without any intervention from him. So the kingdom grows in people's hearts in God's own way, whether we are aware of it or not. The mention of birds finding shelter in the branches of the mustard tree is probably the influence of Ezekiel - Mark writing for a non-Jewish audience would appreciate the reference to all nations finding a place in the kingdom. In the ancient world the size of a mustard seed was a byword for the smallest and most insignificant thing anyone could imagine. Note also that the phrase "birds of the air" was a traditional Jewish expression for the Gentiles - all the non-Jewish people.

Images from the Readings

- Mustard seed – the smallest seed in all the world
- Birds rest in its shade
- Always be cheerful

Reflection for Leaders

The greatness of the kingdom that Jesus and Ezekiel are talking about in today's readings grows from a small beginning, its size can be compared to that of the mustard seed. It is for the benefit of all peoples; it is not the exclusive domain of any one flock. Compare the small beginnings of Jesus' ministry in Galilee with the spread of his message throughout the world and appreciate the vast growth that has taken place over the years. God's kingdom grows of its own accord, in its own way, often unseen,



unrecognised, and undetected in the world. We cannot be complacent but we can save ourselves from feelings of pessimism, cynicism and despair. We can rejoice in God's work that welcomes and attracts so many different people, the kingdom that we are part of and which we seem to be sharing with so many strange birds.

The little seed of God's kingdom is someone opening themselves up to the possibility of God being real and active in their lives. Gradually it grows in them. Perhaps they ask more questions about God, or try to seek more meaning from the Bible, or come to church more often. Perhaps they begin to talk more to God in prayer or seek help from God with the questions in their lives. Perhaps a verse from scripture hits home with new and deeper meaning or perhaps there is a realisation that their life needs to change. Perhaps they receive some special kindness from someone in a time of difficulty or sorrow.

Where do you see yourself opening up more to God's Kingdom in your life?

How can you help to open the hearts of the children to the surprises and small beginnings of God's plan for their lives?

Reflecting on the Readings with the children

Before Sunday read over the suggested discussion points given in the Leader's Liturgy Outline. With the 8-12 year olds: First, listen to the children's own responses to the Reading/s and then, if needed, use some of the discussion starters suggested.

With the 5-7 year olds: Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'.

Suggested Focus

Prepare a focus for the area where the children's Liturgy of the Word is to be held:

Green cloth, Lectionary, candle, mustard seeds,
a tray of soil, water

(Mustard seed is available from a Garden Centre. You may wish to provide a container to plant some mustard seeds in so the children can see them sprout in later weeks – or bring some that are sprouted ahead of time.)



LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

At a suitable moment after the Opening Rites, but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are presented with the Children's Lectionary and a candle and sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

INVITATION – Pōwhiri

I invite the children to join in the procession for their celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

To the Minister of the Word:

Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

Receive this candle as the light of Christ who is present in his Word.

PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS – Te Kapa o te Pukapuka Tapu

WELCOME – Ko te whakatau

Leader: Loving God, your Word is planted in our hearts. Help us to grow in kindness, love, understanding, and forgiveness so that we can share the good news and help God's kingdom grow.

R Amen.

First Reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24

(if used)

The Word of the Lord / Ko te Kupu a te Ariki
Thanks be to God / Whakamoemiti ki te Atua

Psalm 92 Response:

Lord it is good to give thanks to you

or Alleluia!

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10

(if used)

The Word of the Lord / Ko te Kupu a te Ariki
 Thanks be to God / Whakamoemiti ki te Atua

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)

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D G Bm A D G Asus⁴ A
 General: Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Fill us O Lord with your word.____
 Bm G D A G A D
 Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Your word is life for our souls.

Gospel: Mark 4:30-34

Minister of the Word:
Children:

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark
Glory to you, O Lord / Korōria ki ā koe, e te Ariki

At the end of the Gospel:
Children:

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ / Kia whakanuia rā koe, e te Ariki, e Hēhu Karaiti.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH THE CHILDREN – Whai Whakaaro

8-12 year olds: *Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.*

Take along a selection of seeds and ask the children what they think each will become. Then tell them the pine tree seed has the tree inside it but we cannot see it, the carrot seed has the carrot inside it but we cannot see that either. Each is present in the seed but cannot be seen. Give the children some mustard seed to hold in their hands. Ask 2 children to stand back to back on 2 chairs and spread out their arms. Jesus said that given the right conditions, this tiny mustard seed

could grow as big as this. Talk over with the children the different things that seeds need to grow.

- Why do you think Jesus says that the kingdom of God grows just like a mustard seed?
- Can you look back and remember that you have grown taller over the last year or so?
- Can you look back and realise that you understand more about living the Jesus way than you did a year ago, or how you are getting more used to talking with God in prayer, or starting to think more about right and wrong and learning to make good choices? *All these different things show how the kingdom of God is growing inside you, a bit like a seed grows in the earth. All that good growing is about you letting God grow to life in you.*
- Can you think of some other ways that you can see the Kingdom of God growing in yourself or growing in others?
- What do you think of the story Jesus used to explain what God's Kingdom is like?

5-7 year olds: Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'

LITURGICAL ACTION – Ko te Ritenga Karakia

Sing a song about the Kingdom of God (or re-read the short parable) and invite the children to sprinkle their mustard seed(s) on the tray of soil. Water the seeds to start them growing. Remind the children of the water of baptism that started their life as members of God's family.

End with the 'echo prayer' (children echo each line):

Our Father in heaven,

let your kingdom come.

Let it come in me and my family.

Let it come in my school and my church.

All over the world, Father,

Let your kingdom come.



PROFESSION OF FAITH – Panui o te Whakapono

We believe in God the Father,
who made the whole world.
We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
who was born in Bethlehem
and lived among us,
who died on the cross for us,
and rose from the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit
who brings life and love to us all.
We believe that the Church is one family,
and that one day
we will share everlasting life
with God in heaven.
Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL – Te Īnoīnga o te Hunga Whakapono

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

Leader: Let us pray to the God of all creation for our needs:

- For a Church that reaches out to everybody
Let us pray to the Lord ℟ Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For the poor and forgotten people of the world.
Let us pray to the Lord ℟ Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For the unloved ones of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Let us pray to the Lord ℟ Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For the grace to be kind to all those in our family and all those at school.
Let us pray to the Lord ℟ Lord hear our prayer
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

Leader: God of Resurrection and Life hear the prayers we the children of your Church make to you.

All: **Amen**

The children re-join the assembly before the prayers over the gifts.

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Voice A/Voice B

Mark 4:30-34

What is God's kingdom like?

The reading is simply presented in the format for 2 readers to read.
The text is best read in a flow on manner ...

Voice A: Jesus said

Voice B: What is the kingdom like?

Voice A: That's God's Kingdom ...

Voice B: What is God's kingdom like!

Voice A: It's like a tiny, tiny plant,

Voice B: that's put into the ground

Voice A: and grows ...

Voice B: and grows!

Voice A: until

Voice B: it is no longer a tiny plant;

Voice A: but a huge,

Voice B: very big

Voice A: quite enormous,

Voice B: monstrous tree!

Voice A: the tree has branches ...

Voice B: huge,

Voice A: very big,

Voice B: quite enormous,

Voice A: monstrous branches!

Voice B: A BIG tree with BIG branches!

Voice A: Birds come,

Voice B: lots and lots of birds,

Voice A: to rest
Voice B: and nest
Voice A: and feed
Voice B: from the seeds.
Voice A: God's kingdom
Voice B: is like a tiny plant
Voice A: that grows and grows
Voice B: and grows and grows
Voice A: big enough
Voice B: to look after the whole world.
Voice A: God's kingdom
Voice B: is for everyone!
Voice A: God's kingdom is ...
Voice B: huge,
Voice A: very big,
Voice B: quite enormous!
Voice A: God's kingdom
Voice B: is for everyone!



From 'Just Imagine 4, Many Creative ways of presenting Scripture' written by Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises, www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au. Available from the Liturgy Centre.