

Lectionary readings: Ezekiel 17: 22-24; Psalm 92: 1-4, 12-15; 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10, 14-17; Mark 4: 26-34

For reflection and prayer

- **Ezekiel 17:** This passage speaks of how God alone brings life and growth, taking an illustration from nature. Some see in this passage a prediction of the Messiah - the small shoot growing into the majestic cedar - who alone would unite all the nations. If only we would open ourselves to the Lord and co-operate with Him in fulfilling this vision of the Kingdom. This is something we might reflect on this week - how can we help to fulfil this vision of the Kingdom where we are, as we allow the Spirit of God within us to empower us?
- **Psalm 92:** The day is enclosed in prayer. A good way to begin each day is to remind ourselves of God's unfailing love and then carry with us the awareness of His love for us throughout the day. And, having spent the day conscious of God's loving presence with us - no matter what we have to face - we end the day in thankfulness to God for His faithful love. v4: *'You thrill me, Lord, with all you have done for me.'* (NLT) Have we felt that thrill? There's something for us to reflect on this week.
- **2 Corinthians 5:** Our aim is to please God always by how we live, how we treat people, how we think. Paul says that we have died to the old life; we no longer live to indulge our ego, but to please God, and that surely means living like Jesus. As Christians, we are new people, living out of our true Self. As such, we should

stand out from those in society many of whose values are very different, many living selfish, self-seeking lives, concerned only for themselves. Sadly, that is how we so often live too. How can we allow God to change us in the deepest part of our being and so become more like Jesus?

- **Mark 4:** The growth of the Kingdom is not dependent on us alone. God brings the growth. We are invited to sow the seed of God's love everywhere we go. And we leave the rest to God. The Kingdom of God starts in a very small way in our hearts, but it will grow beyond our wildest dreams if we let God work in us and open ourselves to His light and life. Let's reflect on God's amazing power this week and let's open our eyes to the potential in every human being, including ourselves. And as we see God in everyone and the potential lurking in every human soul, let's encourage the seed of faith, remembering that, with God, nothing is impossible. Sometimes we need to get out of the way and let God get on with the work of growth in a person's life. Sensitivity and faith and humility are called for.

A prayer

'Too many words spoken without thought fill our lives, Jesus, when a silent deed in your name would be a million times more effective, and the world would know that God is most vocal in becoming flesh, and is seen and touched and known. If we become hollow vessels, wordy, boring and hypocritical, silence our tiresome tongues and let us speak only when we have praise to offer you, in response to your mighty deeds in human lives.' (Donald Hilton)