

**June 17, 2018 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost 1 Samuel 15:34—16:13, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope Mark 4:26-34**  
(Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening, by Cynthia Bourgeault, Cowley Publications, pg. 4-5, 69-70.)

**In the name of the creator, the redeemer, and the sustainer. Amen.**

**On a warm weekend like this, I'm thinking back to winter...Remember winter? Remember Lent?**

Lent is the season of preparation for Holy Week and Easter, it's a reflective time, a quieter time.

Many of you were part of our community back then.

This year we observed Lent in February and March.

There was snow on the ground, it was cold. Remember?

The days were nearly as short, as they now are long.

**This year our theme for Lent was Mystic Mercy. Remember?**

Together we created this lovely devotional booklet full of reflections and pictures.

We learned a little about the Christian mystics.

We practiced some new ways of resting with God, listening for God, going deep with God...

Things like breathing, walking the labyrinth, centering prayer, noticing our bodies,  
exploring art, lectio divina.

And we planted seeds. Remember?

I mean, of course, metaphorical seeds, but also real live seeds.

The children did: small seeds, tiny seeds, seeds hidden in dark earth, nurtured all through the season, rising  
with the resurrection.

**So much happens in mystery**, so much happens in grace, so much happens in the dark earth, hidden.

This, of course, flies in the face of so many of our traditions...where we want to control things, where we want  
to make things happen.

But in holy mystery God in the quiet makes a space, a space for our hearts to break,

and a space for healing and forgiveness,

a space where God holds us in mercy, and loves us into something new and something beautiful.

**Today, reminded of those precious seeds**, we turn to our Gospel reading, one of those Sunday School  
favorites, the Mustard Seed.

We use an ancient practice of prayer and Bible reading called, *Lectio Divina*, literally: holy, divine reading.

This may be a new practice for some of us, and it may feel odd, or like you're not doing it right, that's okay. Some of you experienced it back in Lent.

There is a spaciousness in this practice, and a spaciousness in this summer season.

When we learned this in February, a number of you came to be afterward taken by it, maybe a little surprised, moved by its sense of space and silence and Spirit.

**Cynthia Bourgeault**, a modern mystic and practitioner writes of the "collective amnesia that fell over Christianity with regard to its own contemplative heritage".

She writes, our minds are like ladders, we climb ladders trying to get somewhere.

In actuality, she says, this life of faith, this practice of Jesus' way, is more truly a circle, fluid in process, moving, sometimes drawing us in deeply, beautifully, organically.

**Today as we practice *Lectio* we'll use a little portion of Mark's Gospel.**

We'll move through four stations, like points on a compass, with silence between.

We'll hear a portion of the passage and as you hear it, listen for a word or a phrase that touches you.

We'll rest in silence.

Then we'll hear it again; hold onto that word or phrase, memorize it, repeat it, chew on it.

Listen to what God may be saying to you through that word or phrase, take what God wants to give you.

And there's more silence.

Then we'll hear it yet again, and this time let it be prayer, your heart speaking to our loving God, moving from your head to engage your heart.

Finally we'll rest, rest in God's presence.

**A few words of guidance and the passage** are in the bulletin.

Use them as you need to, but mostly just let your heart settle into this time of prayer.

**We begin by getting comfortable, becoming silent inside and outside. Take a deep breath, exhale.**

**Listen this first time for a word or a phrase that touches you:**

READER \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus said: "With what can we compare the kingdom of God,  
or what parable will we use for it?

It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth;  
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."

SILENCE

READER \_\_\_\_\_

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SILENCE x 2

Beloved of God, Thank you for entering into this holy mystery.

**May God dwell in you, move in you, grow in you.**

**May Christ's reign surprise us in these summer days.**

**May the Spirit of Wisdom find you in rest, and surround you in love.**

**Amen.**