

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

COLLECT

Keep, O Lord, we beseech thee, thy household the Church in thy steadfast faith and love, that by the help of thy grace we may proclaim thy truth with boldness, and minister thy justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

FIRST READING:

In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: Mortal, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes: Whom are you like in your greatness? Consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon, with fair branches and forest shade, and of great height, its top among the clouds. The waters nourished it, the deep made it grow tall, making its rivers flow around the place it was planted, sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field. So it towered high above all the trees of the field; its boughs grew large and its branches long, from abundant water in its shoots. All the birds of the air made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the animals of the field gave birth to their young; and in its shade all great nations lived. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because it towered high and set its

Ezekiel 31:1-6, 10-14

top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, I gave it into the hand of the prince of the nations; he has dealt with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. Foreigners from the most terrible of the nations have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs lie broken in all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth went away from its shade and left it. On its fallen trunk settle all the birds of the air, and among its boughs lodge all the wild animals. All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to lofty height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height. For all of them are handed over to death, to the world below; along with all mortals, with those who go down to the Pit.

Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14

- 1 It is a good thing to give thanks to the LORD, * and to sing praises to your Name, O Most High;
- 2 To tell of your loving-kindness early in the morning * and of your faithfulness in the night season;
- 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.

11 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, * and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.

12 Those who are planted in the house of the LORD * shall flourish in the courts of our God;

13 They shall still bear fruit in old age; * they shall be green and succulent;

14 That they may show how upright the LORD is, * my Rock, in whom there is no fault.

SECOND READING:

We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling-- if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is

GOSPEL:

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 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.

Mark 4:26-34

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." With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

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