

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

[A Parable]

Today’s sermon will do the things a sermon does:

It will present God’s Law.

The conviction that this world—and we ourselves—are broken.

And it will proclaim God’s Gospel *for you*.

The Good News that God has reconciled the world to Himself
through the Person of Jesus Christ.

But it will do this in a different way from usual.

Today’s sermon will be a parable.

Parables are simply stories; they are made up.

Parables are not, of themselves, *real*.

Not everything in a parable is directly,

literally connected to *real-life* things on a *1:1 ratio*.

So hear this disclaimer:

The characters and events depicted in this parable are entirely fictitious.

Any similarity to actual events or persons, living or dead, is purely... *intentional*.

Yes, while parables are simply stories, they carry deep meaning about *reality*.

[Prophecy]

Jesus taught in parables.

(Mark 4:33-34)

More than five hundred years before Him,

the prophet Ezekiel prophesied in parables.

Parables begin by *hiding*, and end by *revealing*.

It takes reflection and time to understand a parable.

We may need to slow down and hear it again to fully grasp it.

Hear this parable from the prophet Ezekiel:

Thus says the Lord God:

“I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out.

I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one,

and I myself will plant it

on a high and lofty mountain.

On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it,

that it may bear branches

and produce fruit

and become a noble cedar.

And under it will dwell every kind of bird;
in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.

And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord;
I bring low the high tree,
and make high the low tree,
dry up the green tree,
and make the dry tree flourish.

I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

(Ezekiel 17:22-24)

This is the word of the Lord. His Word is true.

[Prophecy Fulfilled]

Consider the parable you just heard.

Parables begin by *hiding*, and end by *revealing*.

It takes reflection and time to understand a parable.

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Hear, again, this parable from the prophet Ezekiel:

Thus says the Lord God:

“I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out.

I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one,
and I myself will plant it
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(Ezekiel 17:22-24)

This is the word of the Lord. His Word is true.

[Prophecy Continued]

Consider the parable you just heard.

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The fullness of this parable has been revealed in Jesus Christ.

But the Holy Spirit's work is not done.

He continues to lead us into all truth.

(John 16:13)

This season of Pentecost is all about the Spirit's work
in revealing Jesus Christ to the world *through disciples like you*.

So as we hear one last time this parable from the prophet Ezekiel,
the images will be your own.

How is the Spirit using you to share the Good News of Jesus Christ?

Where has he planted you?

What fruit do you bear?

If it helps, you may close your eyes.

Hear, again, this parable from the prophet Ezekiel:

Thus says the Lord God:

"I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out.

I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one,

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dry up the green tree,

and make the dry tree flourish.

I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it."

(Ezekiel 17:22-24)

This is the word of the Lord. His Word is true.

And it is written *for you*.

[A Parable Revealed]

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It takes reflection and time to understand a parable.

We may need to slow down and *hear it again* to fully grasp it.

Brothers and sisters, the characters and events *described* in this parable—this *story*—are real.

You are one of them.

You are part of the Great Story.

The Greatest ever told, in fact.

Because that story is true.

You have been grafted into the story of Jesus Christ.

He has given you the authority to share that true story with others.

He is the Lord; He has spoken, and He will do it.

In Jesus name. Amen.

**Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among the people. Amen! (Psalm 96:3)**
