

Ezek. 17:22-24

Proper 6 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost)

June 14, 2009

I Will Accomplish It.

In the name of † Jesus. Amen.

**I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off 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 tress of the field shall know that I am the Lord;**

Thus far the prophecy of Ezekiel.

The growth of God's kingdom. The seed planted in the ground. The seed knows how to grow, when to grow, and that Word does this even though we don't know how these things come to pass. But our Lord knows how it happens. For it is His work and His alone. The work of the sun and moon. The rain and the seeds and finally the plants. He brings it all about.

Jesus remarks that it is the same with the Church. **He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how.** We think we know how to grow the Church. We think we have the right methods, programs, and projects. The truth is we know just as much about how to make the Church grow as know about how to make seeds grow. Painfully little. We can care for seeds and we can care for the Church. For it's God's Kingdom, His Church, and it is His to give it growth. Even if it is frustrating to us.

If it was left to us there would be NO Church. If we were left to ourselves to grow the Church we would make a wreck of it. We would confuse Law and Gospel. We would no longer administer the

sacraments rightly. Our hopes and dreams would be based on what we could do.

Over and over again the world, our sinful human nature, and Satan have tried to stamp out the Church. From the very beginning, from the time Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that Church has been under attack but Has survived. The Lord Will Accomplish It in the face of the struggles of the sinful world:

For in the beginning, Adam and Eve decided that Satan's advice was better than the Word of the Lord.

Shortly after receiving the promise of the seed of the woman who would crush the serpents head, Cain kills Abel.

The people at Babel decided the best way to Heaven was not to have faith but build a tower to Heaven.

There remained only eight souls before the Lord wiped the face of the earth clean.

Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph all struggle with their own sins or the sins of their brothers.

God delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt, but they spent some of their time worshipping a gold calf.

Even as they wandered in the wilderness to the Promised Land, having been given all they needed, the people would rather complain and grumble.

Once they arrived in the promised Land, the Land flowing with milk and honey, His people thanked Him by not following His command to wipe out the unbelievers and started worshipping false Gods.

And the Church still grew and continued.

Even in the face of their leadership. Prophets who were dejected, rejected. The message of the Lord that was spoken but was cast aside. Yet the Word of the Lord stood firm.

The desire for kings did not meet with the perfect ones to grow the nation. Saul turned to sorcery and witchcraft. David was a murderer, adulterer, and a liar. Solomon tolerated all sorts of different religions so that his wives could worship whoever they wanted.

Even during the time of Ezekiel. The Church survived and grew on the promises of God's Word. That He will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. That the Son of God came into the world, the Son of David.

And Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had to take flight for an angry king didn't want to lose his throne.

Jesus was rejected by the people. Some said that He was even in league with Satan. Mocked, scorned, and opposed over and over. Crucified like a common criminal.

After His resurrection He entrusts the Church to 12. Almost all killed for the Word they speak. And the CHURCH still grew.

Soon many said that the Trinity is a sham. Jesus as God and man? That is surely not right.

Other religions grew and many Christians were put to death because they would not bend the knee to false gods. Even within the Church groups began to argue and fight. We aren't from the same place.

Then some began saying that grace is no longer a gift of the cross. That you must earn your forgiveness. That the Word of God is just a made up story for the weak. Our human reason is better than God's Word. Man is the top. Truth? What is truth? There is no such thing as truth the world cries. And the Church survives.

Our congregations grow smaller. We have to be like the movies or a rock concert. Now good is evil. Evil is good.

Parents killing children, children killing parents, that is called progress. And the Church still survives. God is dead. Why would God care? Sin, scandals, hate, gossip, gunman in churches. But the Church survives and grows.

It is a miracle. That as sinful mankind has done so much to put a stop to the Church the Church grows under the shade of the cross. We know not how it does! But it does and it is certainly not because of anything that we have done or not. We go our own way. We want to please ourselves. We try and make God's Word fit our agenda. We think we know better.

And yet here it is. The Church remains. The Word of the Lord grows. Despite the attacks of Satan, of our sinful flesh, the gates of hell have not prevailed over the Church. Babies are still being baptized. The Lord's Body and Blood are still being faithfully administered to the children of God. God's Word is still proclaimed. Sins are confessed and forgiven. The angels of heaven are still rejoicing when even one sinner repents. Though the world and Satan continues to rage there is a harvest being prepared for the Last Day. The Word does its Work and we know not how.

We do not lose faith for the Lord will do it. Just as He promised to the Church during the time of the prophet Ezekiel. That the small sprig from the tree of David would be planted and grow. That it would not look much different than all the others, yet without sin. He would be crucified, one among many, on the Mount of Calvary. A Kingdom grows. The Water and Blood which poured from His side Waters and nourishes the Church. From the Son of God, dead and buried in the ground, his risen and like a seed from Him the Church grows. In Him we have our rest. From Him we have our food and nourishment. It is His Work. For we know not how it works. It is by the power of God that they Church lives and grows. For by His life giving Word, that your sins are forgiven,

He makes the dry lifeless trees to be green and grow and have life in them.

In the branches of His cross we will be found safe and secure. Though the world rages, storms, and attacks we are able to rest securely in the promise of God that His Kingdom will last forever. For the Lord has spoken and He will accomplish it.

Amen.

May the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard and protect your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.