

Mark 4:26-34
June 17, 2018 – 4th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Heavenly Father, *Thy Kingdom Come!*

✠ **Scattering the powerful seed** (vv.26-29)

✠ **Watching alone with Jesus** (vv.30-34)

In the Name of Jesus, God's Word from above, dearly redeemed children of the heavenly Father:

125 years ago the WELS opened our first "World Mission" in Arizona among the Apaches. Two Wisconsin German Lutherans rode trains and horseback to the great Southwest. There they found a sick man waiting out in the desert to die. Using a strange ointment of skunk oil, etc., by God's grace the man was healed. They did not know it was Chief Alchesay. He interrupted a church service to go up to the front, cut his finger and put his blood on the cross. This certified the church as okay for his Apaches. Years later God has raised up Apache pastors and teachers, with the mission spirit to reach out to other reservations of Native Americans. WELS Kingdom Workers from New Life have helped restore homes and hope in Jesus. Everything in the name of Jesus: **Heavenly Father, *Thy Kingdom Come!***

✠ **Scattering the powerful seed** (vv.26-29)

This week at Minnesota District Convention we heard many exciting stories from WELS World Missions Administrator Larry Schlomer. Let's share some victories of **the powerful seed** of God's Word from "Faces of Faith."¹ We don't know how a seed can have the power to grow. Sunlight, water and soil don't make little pebbles grow in the way that God powers up seed to sprout. Example: Without their parents' help two girls in Michigan have **the powerful seed** of God's Word animating their joy and friendship. First it was Haileigh helping with a soccer camp at Shepherd of the Lakes, Fenton, MI. She came to church the very next day, then a few weeks later brought her friend. Avery said, "Last week I thought Christianity was just about living a certain way, but now I know it's about Jesus forgiving my sins." Seven months of learning and Avery is getting baptized; both are being confirmed. **Powerful seed!**

West to Wyoming. A grandfather asks a pastor to look up his granddaughter's boyfriend. No contact information, but campus connections. The girl's boyfriend takes BIC, becomes the mission's first confirmand. He graduates from the University of Wyoming and moves four hours north. No church – no problem! Carter and fiancé Emily are starting a second site, using livestream Facebook. **Powerful seed!**

You think teaching Sunday School only affects a few little minds? Let Seng Xiong tell her story:

At the age of four, my parents (who are shamans) enrolled my siblings and me into Sunday School to keep us occupied. Even though I didn't speak or understand English, being at church made me happy. As I walked into class, I was afraid because I didn't know anyone. I observed and nodded yes to everything. At the end of class, I remember praying for the first time. I didn't understand what to do so my Sunday School teacher held my hands, gently placing them together, brushed her hand down my face to close my eyes, and began to talk. When she talked, I felt at peace. My body was calm, and I felt safe. Later that day, I asked my sister if her class did the same. She told me, "Yes, it's called praying. We pray when we want to talk to God. When we're happy, mad, sad, or just want to talk." A few months later, my family left the church. Even though I didn't fully understand who God was or what my class taught me, I understood how to pray and continued to throughout my life. Through prayers, God was there at my happiest moments and through my hardest life challenges. Though him I survived an abusive marriage, divorce, custody battle for my two girls, and getting laid off work.

¹ For copies visit WELS.net/missions. Subscribe for blogs and newsletters at wels.net/subscribe. Pray continually.

After I was laid off, I accepted a job at a school where I met my current pastor's wife and her brother who were part of the evangelism team at Immanuel Hmong Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. As they both encouraged me to continue to seek God and for my small family to visit the congregation, my daughters and I became members in August of 2016. After Pastor Pheng Moua baptized me, I prayed to God, "Even after 26 years you have not forsaken me."

Scattering the powerful seed brings growth in Canada. Sudanese Thomas' friend said, "St. Paul is a good church. They have a good pastor. They teach good doctrine. You should come." Four years and running Thomas keeps **Scattering** in America and refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. He taking PSI (Pastoral Studies Institute) courses to become a "good pastor with good doctrine." **Powerful seed!**

Closer to home, PSI at Holy Trinity Lutheran in New Hope, Pastor Dennis Klatt. Matthew studies and keeps **Scattering the powerful seed** among his 27 churches in Liberia, West Africa. 86 leaders of congregations and over 500 lay people attended their general conference last December. "My...insight has increased. I have a clearer understanding of Christian doctrine from the Word of God. My preaching and teaching styles have changed because I now look at the context of the Scriptures and let the Bible speak for itself rather than basing my words on human reasoning and traditions. Through the PSI courses I learned about the 'three alones': grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone."

✠ **Watching alone with Jesus (vv.30-34)**

"When he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything to them." (4:34) He's still explaining everything to us – more than we can ask or imagine. We're **watching** "One Latin America" (1LA) as David a bookstore owner is gathering friends and family for worship in Argentina. He one of a million followers on Academia Cristo Facebook taking live classes with our missionaries. The waiting list is over 1,000 names! Every country of Latin America has been reached. Nations enjoy the shade.

We're watching in Africa where Gospel kindness touches the handicapped in Malawi through our Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM). Violet became a nurse to help relieve suffering **with Jesus**.

Watching in East Asia amid government restrictions, we're making connections through trained pastors and coworkers. Larry in Hong Kong just wanted his girlfriend. She told him, "If you want to spend time with me on Sunday, you know where I am." Chasing his girl to church was really the Holy Spirit chasing him so mustard seed faith could grow into a tree! Larry is now the head of evangelism, catching every non-Christian he can. He found a wife plus hope in eternal life **alone with Jesus**.

Watching in Vietnam: Can you believe it? It's like Paul's vision in Acts 16 of a man pleading: *"Come over and help us!"* A Hmong pastor in Thailand moved to Kansas City, MO, and joined a WELS church. His five sons took PSI classes and became WELS pastors. One was posting his sermons online. A group of Christians in Vietnam found his sermons and asked for pastoral training. Now their church body has grown from 65,000 to 100,000 members and formed 53 new congregations. The communist government of Vietnam noticed a positive change from troubling legalism and discord to peace and stability in their communities. The Vietnamese government has invited WELS to build a theological training facility in the capital city of Hanoi. They say this religion brings peace to their land. Pray for \$500,000 to build and God's grace to coordinate curriculum and teachers to answer this call for help!

See how God starts small as mustard seed? See how He makes His Gospel grow so large that the nations want to come and live like birds in the shade? These stories are really our story at New Life. God starts small with little children in Sunday School/VBS. He grows their faith with Gospel seeds we cannot ask or imagine. *"All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing."* (Colossians 1:6 NIV84)

Note the reality. We're running out of time! *"As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."* Work while it is day. Pray as if everything depends on God; work as if everything depends on you. **Jesus...alone** saves! "Make hay while the sun shines." Amen.