

ARE YOU ABOUT THE RIGHT BUSINESS?

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Hallandale, FL

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Coral Gables, FL

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Miami Gardens, FL

June 17, 2018 – 4th Sunday after Pentecost

Children's Sermon: *Water the Seeds of Faith*

Object: A jar of mustard.

Scripture: Mark 4:26-34

Hymns: Proc.: *Father, We Adore You* **Rec:** *My Faith Looks Up To Thee*

Have you ever planted seeds in the ground? After you planted the seeds, how did you make your plants grow? Did you water your seeds and weed the plants when your plants started to grow? And, did your watering and weeding help your plants grow? The truth is, we really don't know. But, we kind of believe, watering our plants and weeding our plants probably helped our plants grow better.

In our Gospel today, Jesus says the kingdom of God is like a teeny tiny mustard seed that grows into a very large plant. I think Jesus was saying, though we may only be teenagers and we still are very young, we can grow more and more to love Jesus and one another. Now, we might not exactly know how our hearts grow more and more to love Jesus and one another, just as we are not sure how watering and weeding our plants help our plants grow. But, *we do believe* our faith which starts out small as a mustard seed can grow if we come to church to pray and learn more about Jesus each day

Our Bible lesson is a good one to study today because it is Father's Day. It is a day we honor our fathers who are important in our lives because they do a lot of watering of seeds that they plant to help us have a good family. I hope we can learn from our fathers how to also water the seeds of faith in our lives so that our love for Jesus and for one another will grow more and more each day. Let us pray and thank God for our fathers who have taught us how to water the seeds that give us a good family and who teach us how to water those seeds that make our faith grow stronger and stronger each and every day. Amen.

DEAR LORD: Thank you for our fathers and thank you for you being our Father. Help us to always water the seeds of faith in our lives to help us love you and each other every day. Amen.

AND, MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSES ALL HUMAN UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

I like the story told of a father who was asked by his wife to help change the diapers of their 1st baby boy. “*I’m busy,*” he said, “*I’ll do the next one.*” The next time came around, the wife asked her husband again for help. The husband looked puzzled and said, “*Oh! I didn’t mean the next diaper. I meant the next baby!*” If that doesn’t make you laugh, it’ll make you cry.

Well, today we honor our fathers. And, that’s good, because dads don’t get a whole lot of respect these days. There’s 1 story told of a father who used to sing his little children to sleep. He even learned a few lullabies to vary his repertoire. He kept doing this, that is until 1 night when he overheard his little 4 year-old daughter give her younger brother this advice. She said, to her younger brother, “*If you pretend you are asleep, Daddy might actually stop singing.*” That was the end of lullabies being sung in that family. And, Dad never sung another single lullaby again.

Well, you may or may not know this, but Father’s Day goes back to a Sunday morning in May 1909 when a woman by the name of Sonora Smart Dodd was sitting in a church in Spokane, WA listening to a Mother’s Day sermon. She thought of her father who had raised her and her siblings after their mother died in childbirth, and she thought fathers should get recognition also. She asked the pastor if he would deliver a sermon honoring fathers on her dad’s birthday which so happened to be coming up in June. The Pastor agreed. But, it still took some time for fathers to get the honor they deserved. Mother’s Day became an official holiday in 1914. However, Father’s Day never became an official holiday until 1972. And, here’s another interesting fact. Mother’s Day is the busiest day of the year for florists, restaurants, and, even at one time, for long distance phone companies. On the other hand, Father’s Day used to be the day on which most collect phone calls were made. Will fathers ever get the respect they deserve? **In any case, we say Happy Father’s Day today to all our fathers today!**

Speaking about all those things our fathers do for us, I am reminded of what comic Robin Fairbanks once said. He said, “*I have an 18 year-old named Alexis. I chose that name because if I hadn’t had her, I’d be driving one.*” Well, I guess being a good father does require sacrifice. Well, all this conversation brings us to our Gospel this morning in which Jesus describes the kingdom of God. Let’s read together verse 26-27 from this morning’s Gospel: *26 Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.”* Now, Jesus was not talking about Father’s Day in this passage, but isn’t this the very first area in which fathers and mothers participate in the coming of God’s kingdom on earth – in the raising of their children. Raising good children is like scattering seed upon the ground.

As author Ken Canfield notes, there are no guarantees in raising kids or planting seeds. A farmer can do all the right things and still lose a crop. Same is true of parents. As for the farmer, he can till the ground at the right time, put in the right seed in the ground, irrigate, and fertilize the soil. But, that does not guarantee the crop will grow. As for parents, they can try to do all the right things and provide

everything they can for their children, but their child may still not turn out properly. But, in all this we can take heart. **God only expects us to do our best.** If we have done our best in planting and nurturing the seed, **God will provide blessings “in his time.”** Amen!

Syndicated writer William Raspberry for the Washington Post recently wrote an article about South Africa’s game managers who decided to transport some of the young male elephants to a nearby game park. However, dozens of years later, several of these young male elephants began to attack the park’s herd of rhinos, an endangered species. They would mercilessly use their trunks to throw sticks at the rhinos, chase them over long hours and great distances, and attacked the rhinos causing serious injury. Park managers responded by unfortunately killing some of the worst young male elephants. But, then someone came up with the brilliant idea to bring in some bigger, stronger male elephants that could bring the younger adolescent elephants under control. To the delight of the park officials, it worked. The bigger elephants quickly established a natural hierarchy and reduced the violent behavior. Raspberry said, *“The new discipline was not just simply a matter of intimidation. The younger elephants actually began to start following the Big Daddy elephants around, yielding to their authority, learning from them proper elephant conduct. The assaults on the rhinos ended abruptly.”* Raspberry’s point was, living creatures need a father. **The spiritual lesson, of course, for you and me in all this is, if we do our best to plant the seed - this is all that God expects.** We don’t have to worry whether those seeds take root and grow. **God will work things out. But, if we are persistent in planting and nurturing the seed, the ground will be made fertile and blessings will come “in his time.”**

Now, I want to talk for a bit about this seed analogy that Jesus uses. Let’s read verses 30-32 from this morning’s Gospel: *³⁰He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth;³² 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.”* Perhaps many of you know, the mustard seed is a tiny seed, but it grows rapidly, maturing into a very large plant. Jesus was referring to what botanists call black mustard which grows more like a shrub than a plant. It grows as large as 6 ft tall. And, believe it or not, black mustard is essentially considered a weed. Once established, it is extremely difficult to root out. So, why, you might ask, would Jesus say in this morning’s Gospel, *“The kingdom of God is like a bunch of dandelion seeds that we need to sew on our front lawns.”* Why would anyone do a crazy thing like that – sowing dandelion seeds? And, we all know how rapidly dandelions spread and how persistently they can grow. But, maybe this is exactly what Jesus is trying to tell us about the kingdom of God. The seeds of heaven may seem tiny and insignificant, but once they take root in the ground, there is no stopping them.

And, this brings us to our **2nd spiritual lesson** for this morning. **The seed we plant may seem tiny and insignificant,** and we may not even see much happen at 1st as a result of doing some tiny, small random

act of kindness, **but once the love of God takes root, there is no stopping the spiritual growth that can happen for those who see the love of God coming their way.** You see, it's all about you and me being about the business of the kingdom of God in our lives – a willingness to plant and nurture the good seed – and, a focus on doing God's work of love *“on earth as it is in heaven.”* And, once the seed is planted, the seed will surely grow.

And, so in closing this morning, I would like to tell you this true story about how a seed of love and kindness planted by 1 young man towards another made a difference. A boy by the name of Mark was walking home from school 1 winter day when he saw another boy ahead of him trip in the snow. The boy, whose name was Billy, dropped all of his books, sweater, and a soccer ball. Mark knelt down, helped Billy pick up his articles, and since Mark was going the same way, he offered to help Billy carry home his personal belongings. As the boys walked, Mark discovered Billy loved video games and history, but he was failing his other subjects. Billy also told Mark that he had just broken up with his girlfriend. Mark said to Billy, *“Gosh, that must be hard. If you ever need somebody to talk to, you can talk to me. And, if you feel like it, I would like you to come to church with me some Sunday.”* Moments later, the boys arrived at Billy's home. They watched TV for a while and the boys saw each other from time to time after that cold winter day.

Years went by until it was a few days before high school graduation. Billy said to Mark, *“Do you remember that day when you helped me pick up my personal belongings in the snow years ago?”* Billy went on to say, *“That day, I was cleaning out my locker so I wouldn't leave any mess for anyone to clean up. I had been storing up my mom's sleeping bills, and I was going home that day with the intention of killing myself. My insides were broken up into a million pieces, but that afternoon, you helped me believe that I could put my life back together again. And, if the offer still stands, I would still like to go to Church with you next week.”*

Isn't it amazing - when you and I are about the business of the kingdom of God in our lives, planting what we might think at the time is an insignificant seed can turn into a blessing, a miracle perhaps, or as in this case save a life? Whether, we are a father, a mother, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a sister or brother, rich or poor, a disciple of Christ will always plant and nurture the seeds of the kingdom. We don't have to worry about the crop taking root or whether the crop will be big or small. God will take care of that *“in his time.”* As long as our faith looks up to Thee, our Lord will take care of everything else *“in his time.”* Today we give thanks to our fathers especially who planted the seed of faith in our lives. Let's each one of us – father, mother,, brother, sister, friend, husband, wife, significant other, or friend – be about the business of planting seeds of in the life of others so that other make experience the faith we believe in that that looks up to Thee. Always be about the business of planting and nurturing the seeds of the kingdom in your life and the life of others. Blessings and miracles will soon be coming your way and the ways of others where seeds are planted - today, now, and forever more. Amen.

