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St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 6/Year B  
June 17, 2018  
Text: Mark 4: 26-34

*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Good morning! And Happy Father's Day to all of our men present here today. Okay, so I really didn't have anything to do this week (tongue in cheek) so I thought I'd Goggle the history of Father's Day. There are a few variations of how this holiday began but there is one story that is a constant so this is the one I will share.

Father's Day is an offshoot of Mother's Day with credit is given to Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, WA. The story goes that the turn of the century people were really into celebrating Mother's Day across the country. The federal government had not officially recognized the holiday but many states had adopted the third Sunday in May to honor mothers. And during a Mother's Day church service Sonora had an idea-why not create a day to honor fathers?

Sonora shared her story of how when she was 16, her mother died in childbirth. Her father, William Smart, a veteran of the Civil War, was left to care for six children. In Sonora's eyes, her father did a wonderful job taking care of her and her siblings. She believed her father and other dads like him, deserved recognition just like any mother.

So in 1909 and after jockeying some dates around with the Spokane Ministerial Alliance, June 19 was chosen and the first Father's Day was celebrated in the state of Washington. The idea quickly spread throughout the states. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge recognized Father's Day as the third Sunday in June of that year and other states followed suit. Congress officially recognized Father's Day in 1956. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson issued a proclamation calling for the third Sunday in June to be recognized as Father's Day. In 1972, President Richard Nixon permanently establish the observance of the third Sunday in June as Father's Day in the United States. Sonora lived to see it all as she died in 1978 at the ripe old age of 96. And there you have it.

So like Mother's Day, we give much love and homage to and remember fathers and father-like figures living and deceased. Hallmark makes a big buck and dads (if you are blessed to still have one in your life) gets another power tool, mug and tie that say "World's Best Dad" to add to his collection.

But all kidding aside, we give God thanks for fathers realizing that not everyone will share a fondness for this day. Still, it is a blessing for many people to have grown up with a good father or father figure in their lives. Like many of you who are or were so blessed, I give God praise and thanks for fathers everywhere, especially my own father. I have fond memories of long car rides on the weekends, trips to the zoo, and his homemade pies, the crust made with his own two hands. Him pulling my first loose tooth. My family never prayed together although we were always reminded to say our prayers before going to sleep but I do remember my dad taking us to church. He could not kneel because he wore a brace that went up to his thigh but he managed a combination of sorts by sitting close to the edge of the pew with his right leg resting over the kneeler. He rarely looked up at the altar but kept his head bowed in prayer. This is one of the images of him that I remember most.

Our dads taught us many things-how to throw a ball, tie a tie, drive a car, change a tire, do a little plumbing or electrical work. They taught us how not to reduce a great piece of meat on the grill to a charred inedible lump; to be kind, respectful, considerate, how to speak up for ourselves, how to look someone straight in the eye and tell the truth, how to pray, how to love. These are some of the things that Jesus taught as he walked this earth. He also shared much about the kingdom of God and God whom he called Father. And when he taught his disciples how to pray he said to pray "Our Father..." For we too are children of God.

Often during his ministry, Jesus used parables to teach the crowds which included all manner of persons-the learned and uneducated, poor and rich, and laborers of every ilk. Jesus used parables in order to teach about the kingdom of God; to give his hearers a glimpse into the mystery and majesty and life of God to which we are invited to share. In today's gospel Jesus tells two parables and he uses the image of seeds.

First, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God is like someone scattering seeds. Instead of worrying about the seeds he has sown, the grower simply

sleeps and trusts God and nature's process to do what seeds are supposed to do-sprout and grow. He does not know exactly HOW but *somehow* the seeds are slowly transformed from sprout to blade and then to grain which can then be harvested. Then Jesus tells a second parable and he says the kingdom is like a mustard seed. A mustard seed is an extremely tiny seed and can grow into a huge shrub eight to ten feet high, large enough to become a shelter for the birds of the air. Again, we don't exactly know how such a teeny tiny seed can become a huge shrub but *somehow* it does!

And this is like God's kingdom. Jesus is telling us in spite of all the negativity in the world, in spite of all our silliness, God's kingdom is near and is growing. Theologian, Dave Lose, remarked that, "These two parables fall right into that tensile, interesting, and even exciting "now and not yet" dimension of God's reign".\*

As followers of Jesus, you and I are to be seed and soil that brings life and love to this world. As the Body of Christ we are to "bring it", as the younger generation says, and then allow God to do what God does- use us as participants for the further building up of the kingdom.

Someone wrote in a blog this week that God's kingdom may be like planting potatoes. Because they grow beneath the soil, you won't know if potatoes are growing until time to harvest them. Yet all the while they are developing and growing into something valuable.

We may never be fully aware of all the times that God uses us in our everyday lives. And those times are not always huge and grandiose or even barely noticeable. We will not always be aware of the impact that we have. Fathers and mothers, who are the first to plant seeds, hope they have instilled in us right from wrong and taught and modelled for us- respect, values, morals, and love; all those good things and more, and hopefully we've *listened* and then taught our children (or nieces and nephews) who will hopefully teach their children and then their children, and then their children. Educators can only hope that something said or done in the classroom will somehow be beneficial to their students at some point in their lifetime. Preachers can only pray that some little nugget preached and/or *modeled* will make a difference in someone's life at the right moment. We may think that any small act we do is insignificant but it may well be monumental in someone else's life. We may even think that because we are a smaller congregation these days there is little we can do to effect change in our

community and in the world, this diocese, even within this parish. And that simply isn't so. We are the fertile soil in which seeds are planted and are changed into something valuable. And we are like that little mustard seed that has the potential to grow into a huge bush and provide continued hospitality and safety and sustenance and nourishment and welcome as long as we stay rooted in faith and in God's Word.

Jesus says that something greater is at work in the world. And it is God who is still actively planting and tilling and weeding our lives and this old world.

We may never know *who* God will use in our lives nor will we really know *how* our lives will impact someone else's. We may never clearly see *where* the path that God leads will take us. We may not be privy to *when* things may or may not happen. We may never see the fruits of our labors or the fruits from our acts of kindness however large or small. We can only TRUST, like the farmer who planted seed; that God is present within and throughout our lives and that God's kingdom really is at work in the world.

May God help us to be sowers of the seeds of his Word and of his Kingdom. May we sow with faith leaving all the rest to God the Father and Mother of us all. Amen.

\*David Lose, "Working Preacher", *Pentecost 4B: Quiet & Dynamic Confidence*, June 13, 2018