

Sunday, June 17, 2018

2 Corinthians 5:6-10,14-17

Mark 4:26-34

Walk By Faith and Grow

A father loved to read to his young children stories each night before bed. Often he would exaggerate or ad lib parts of the story being shared often realizing his children were asleep as he spun a better story than the written one. However one day the boy was sitting in his first grade class and the teacher was reading the story of one of his favourites, "The Three Little Pigs". The teacher came to the part of the story where the first pig was trying to gather building materials for his home.

She said "...And so the pig went up to the man with a wheel barrow full of straw and said, "Pardon me sir, but might I have some of that straw to build my house with?"

Then the teacher asked the class "And what do you think that man said?" The little boy raised his hand and said "I know! I know! The man said, 'Holy smokes! A talking pig!'" The teacher was unable to teach for the next ten minutes. And this became a conversation at parent-teacher night!

It seems we may not be able to predict what our kids are going to say, but there's one thing for certain, it'll usually be something unexpected. Hopefully they won't repeat something we've said, that maybe we shouldn't and embarrass us. And the other thing we know for sure is our children are like sponges, they soak up everything we say and everything we do. And this is good for as parents and especially fathers on his special day, we need to be the examples of faith by which we are seen, in order that others may grow. What is said to children and about them makes a huge difference in who they become.

In our reading from Mark 4:26-34 Jesus is teaching the many people who have gathered at the beach. There are so many people that Jesus decided to sit in a boat on the lake. He is teaching them in parables. He has shared the parable of the sower and how the seed falls on different types of soil with some successful in growth and other seed not. But in these particular parables, Jesus makes it very clear that often times it is the smallest things which make the biggest difference in our faith. What we say and what we do are like seeds planted in the hearts and spirits of our children but also those who are young in faith and understanding of Jesus.

Jesus is teaching about the kingdom of God. And to describe it, he tells this story to which those listening may relate. He says, "A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day,

whether he sleeps or gets us the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—in sequence, sprouts, roots, stalk, head and then the full kernel in the head. When the grain is ripe, the sickle is put to it and all is harvested for later use.

When we think of families today we reflect on the parents who influence the lives of their children. On this Father's Day we reflect on what fathers/ dads/ grandfathers did in the past and how you have been changed and grown because of your father/dad. But this influence depends upon the kind of relationship you had/have with your father as a child and as an adult.

When we think of the relationship of parents and children we often want to say to parents to be mindful of what is said and done because children will imitate you. Some say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Children will not only imitate us, but in many ways, they will grow up to be like us simply because we are their parents. Surveys show that parents still have more influence than peer pressure, even though the kids might rebel.

Why state this as Jesus talks about seeds growing night or day? Because we all continue to grow not just physically- but emotionally, mentally, and spiritually night and day no matter how old we are. As we age we often hear people talk about their bodies growing older—aches, pains, hurts and parts just not working as they once did. We might hear about people as they age, not as aware as they once were, or forgetting things because there are so many things on their mind. Yet we know that as we get older we do get more emotional-or at least show it more if we are confident in who we are and what we have accomplished. But it is our spiritual growth that Jesus refers to that continues night and day as well. Yet we must continue to plant the best seed possible in order to reap the best harvest.

What are you doing to spiritually grow? We sing that we are to "Read your Bible, pray every day" and we'll grow—not just physically, but spiritually as well. But we are also to use the tools we learn when we are young so that we can teach others how to spiritual grow closer to God and share Jesus' story.

In elementary school we learn so many foundational skills—adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, spelling, printing and now of course how to use iPad and computers. But one of the first things taught which leads to big presentations later on in life is what is known as Show and Tell. Not only do children take to school something important to talk about, it is also the way of teaching our children. As parents we are called to Show children how to live as a Christian in the world today. And we are called to tell them how much Jesus loves them and

died and rose from death for them. But how often do we do this? Maybe at Easter? Maybe on a Sunday?

Maybe we need to consider this statement by Thomas Merton: "If the you of 5 years ago doesn't consider the you of today a heretic, you are not growing spiritually." How much have you grown in your relationship with God/ Spirit?

Jesus then tells the parable of the mustard seed which many of those listening to him would know is very small. But is so important in flavouring food. These seeds start out really puny and they are like the kingdom of God which also starts small and then grows into a large shrub with many branches. Large enough to support the bird of the air which can rest in the branches. .

Once there was a man not quite 5 feet tall who applied for a job as a lumberjack in the Yukon. This company also believed in reforestation so when the foreman, thinking to discourage this vertically challenged man gave him a large ax, set him before a tree hundreds of feet tall, and very wide in diameter, and told him to chop it down. He also told him to plant small seedlings from the greenhouse. Within minutes the tree had been felled and a new seedling was planted near the felled tree.

. The amazed foreman asked him where he'd learned to plant trees so quickly and of course chop them down so powerfully. The little man replied, "When I worked in the Sahara forest." "You mean, the Sahara desert." "That was after I got there," said the small lumberjack. I also planted trees but it was just too hard to water them, the hose was way too heavy for me to pull all the time from the tap so it really became a desert!

When we reflect on Jesus' teachings of growing spiritually, we need to be confident and know that as we live be faith we will please God. What drives us to do this is Jesus' love for us because if we have faith and believe, we will be convinced that he died for all so that we might live eternally. And if we believe this, we no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died and was raised again. We know longer need to keep this faith to ourselves, but want to Show and tell other how Christ Jesus has made a difference in our lives. We want to be like Him in what do and say. We want to be like Jesus and to have the faith of our fathers long ago, to have faith that others see in us and want to imitate. How important is this? It is important because it is because we become a new creation – the old is gone, we become new—we are assured of forgiveness and reconciliation with God is made new. We have put on Christ Jesus and become

spiritually like him. We need only to live as he taught each day until that day God will call us home.

But in the meantime we are to imitate Jesus, so that others will see him in us, and want to be as he calls us to be—faithful, loving and willing to show and tell others of his love.

Let us pray

Holy God as we hear these stories of growing like seeds, nurtured and planted, we pray that you would bless families today who are in need of your Spiritual grace and guidance. Bless us also as we seek to renew our faith as we continue to grow in hope and the assurance that you guide and protect us always. Amen.