

Trinity church - Janesville
June 21, 2006
Year B Proper 6
Mark 4:26-34

Good morning!!!

I suppose most of you know that today is also called “Father’s Day”. How could one avoid all advertisements about such. But this is supposed to be a day in which we let our fathers know that we DO appreciate them—occasionally!

How many of you are fathers? I am not sure that you guys realize just how important you are in the development of your children, but you certainly are. Father to son,----and father to daughter. I am not sure but what the father/daughter relationships are the most important of the two. But your relationship to either or both is extremely important.

Now, just to show you that I am more appreciative of fatherhood than Father Bob was to Motherhood, please note. For centuries men have worn pants of some sort. We gals only were allowed to discover the comfort of slacks in recent years. But if you look, you can see that I am wearing slacks today as a semi-note of appreciation and respect for the male species.

But did you see Father Bob wear a skirt to show us that he considered us equally as important on Mother’s Day as I did you men on Father’s Day?????

Be that as it may, there was a curious little boy named Bobby that asked a very unusual question of his mother.

“Mama” asked little Bobby, “Don’t men ever go to heaven?”

“Why, of course dear”, she answered. “What makes you ask?”

“Well, some men DO go to heaven, but they only get there by a close shave”

Anyway, Happy Fathers day to all of you!

This is the Second Sunday of Pentecost. Whoopee doo!!! What does that mean, some of you might ask? Well, for one thing, the color for this season is green and will be so for a long time. Green denotes growth, especially in intellectual learning and actions. Really it is telling what Jesus is meaning in his gospel sayings during this period of time. He traveled all around Palestine, or Judea, or present day Israel trying to explain just what his life and coming death was to mean for his followers to hear, to see, and to follow. It is what he is telling us to do in our Christian life.

And here I will seemingly digress a little bit. Perhaps most of you are aware that delegates from all over the world are meeting in Columbus Ohio right now for the three year event in our church that we call General Convention. Some have said that the importance of this convention could be as important as the Council of Nicea in the year 325. Will we remain one church??? Or will we be split right down the middle????? By tonight, if all goes as planned, the direction of our church will largely be decided as those delegates elect the next Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

Most of the hull-a-balloo going on there right now is about one verse that is

found in the Old Testament book of Leviticus where it says (Lev. 18:22) “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman: it is an abomination.”

Yes, it is there, in black and white. However my question is—Why do we Pick and Choose???

If you read that book from the Old Testament you will find many other things there as well. How many of you like ham or pork chops or even venison??? Again, Lev. 11:17 says, “And the swine, because it parts it’s hoof and is cloven footed, it is unclean to you.”

How about tattoos?? They are quite popular today. Again, in Lev. 19:28 it says “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord.” Just read that book. I think we would all be amazed at how sinful we are if we kept all those laws.

As far as I am concerned, I am sure that my God loves Gene Robinson. My God loves everybody. I am firmly convinced that God made us the sexual person that we are and that everything that he made was good. I am also convinced that, in the future, one’s sexuality will be proven to be a genetic thing over which we have no control.

But who am I to say? I repeat, why do we pick and choose our quotations? Whatever the church does or does not do, I am going to let God decide. If it is from God—it will be. If not, it won’t. I am sure that God loves Gene Robinson and who am I to decide about lifestyle. I say, God is working his purpose out. Let us quit

this haggling and bickering and spending thousands and thousands of dollars about that Bishop I have never seen and probably never will. Let us get on with doing what we are supposed to do—Spread the Good News of Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us ACT like Christians are supposed to act. The theme of this year’s convention is “Come and Grow” and I think it is time we started to do just that!!

Today’s gospel consists of a couple of parables. Jesus often spoke in parables to provide us with something to make us think a little about what we should be doing. He said things that were aimed for you and for me. What was the truth he wanted us to find out from his stories for today?

I found out that in those two short parables there were lots of unmistakable truths. One, it points out the helplessness of man. It vividly demonstrates that man has little or no control over the unfolding events. Take a seed. The farmer does not make that seed grow. He doesn’t even understand how it does happen. When you take that small seed and mix it with some others, and sit there and look at it, many things will become obvious. They vary in size. They come in different colors and no two are the same. But somewhere within that seed is the secret of life and growth itself. Man does not possess that secret. Man can discover things and rearrange things. But man does not—and cannot—make that seed grow!

And so it is with the kingdom of God. We do not create it.....the KINGDOM is God’s!!! We can hinder it, we can frustrate it, OR we can choose to provide an opportunity for the kingdom to come alive more fully and more rapidly by the

things we do and say. But the Kingdom is God's!

We all know that nature's growth is often very slow. We do not see a plant growing. I once had an amaryllis bulb and I could tell that it was growing rather rapidly. But it wasn't until I took a measuring stick and placed it in the pot that I could tell that it was growing from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch each night. No matter how much I sat and looked at it I couldn't see a sign of life, or, in fact, even see anything happen at all.

And so it is with the kingdom of God. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the kingdom is on its way. Let us take just a century ago, when a woman by the name of Elizabeth Fry went to London's New Gate Prison. There she found some 350 women and children crowded into two small wards. They lived and cooked and ate and slept on the floor. They crowded, half naked, almost like beasts, begging for money which they spent for booze which they could get at a bar located within the prison itself. She even found a nine year old boy waiting to be hung for poking a stick through a window!!

Now a days, things like that are unthinkable. Why??? Because the Kingdom of God is on its way. The growth of the kingdom may, like the growth of the plant, be imperceptible from day to day, but may be clearly seen as the years go by.

We all know that when the farmer puts that seed in the soil, he expects SOMETHING to happen. And so it is with Jesus and his parables. When he plants them in our midst, he expects something to happen.

He expects us to have patience. “When the time is come,” he said. He expects us to put aside our own little petty gripes, our own petulant selfishness, and our irritable human hastiness and to cultivate in our souls the patience which learns to wait on God.

Secondly, he expects us to have hope. If God is the God we believe him to be, is there room for pessimism in our lives??? Room for remorse, regret and the realization of failure and sin, but lack of hope?? NO.

But he does expect us to have FAITH. Faith that lets us know daily that He is in charge of his world. Faith that may be just as small as that tiniest of mustard seeds.

The church is the family of God. It has room in it for all peoples and all nations of the world. It even has room in it for you and for me. There are no barriers in this kingdom of God except those man has made. It is man who builds the barriers between husband and wife, between parents and children and between neighbor and neighbor. Isn't it up to us to try our best to forget ourselves—our own wants and needs? Isn't it time we tried to knock down those barriers that we have built for ourselves and our loved ones?

Even though we often can't see the fruits of our labors, we must continue to work for his coming with patience and with hope and with the faith of the grain of mustard seed. Isn't it time for us all to work together to spread this kingdom of God?

I am going to end by quoting from hymn 534:

“God is working his purpose out
as year succeeds to year
God is working his purpose out
and time is drawing near.

All we can do is nothing worth
unless God blessed the deed
Vainly we hope for the harvest tide
till God gives life to the seed.

Yet nearer and nearer draws the time
The time that surely shall be
when the earth shall be filled with the Glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.”