

3 Pentecost-Proper 6  
June 13, 2021

We are a week away from Father's Day and I am continuing to recall my time with my Dad and the gifts he brought to me. I am fortunate, I know, for having a terrific and life-giving relationship with my Dad. I am aware that is not true for everyone. When I think life with him (he died on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1991) I think of both larger events or swaths of time and also particular events that stand out to me. As a nature photographer I am drawn both to the large pictures and the very small ones (even minute) as representation of the image that is before me. Both can be illuminating and represent what I might understand to be the heart of the picture. Today I want to share with you a small event that has helped shape my life over these many years.

My Dad and I were taking a bus trip to Charleston, West Virginia. Winding our way through London, Hugheston, Cedar Grove, Belle, Lehigh Malden, Snow Hill and then Charleston we passed many churches that lined our way. I asked my Dad this question: Why is it that we have so many churches and we can't get along better? Dad paused then responded: That is a very good question. Subsequently he responded to other of my questions with the same answer. I began to understand that he wanted me to wrestle with the question and knowing that changed my whole understanding of exploration, digging deeper into the issues of life, and understanding why those questions kept being important to me.

Rather than being a book with answers to our every questions, the Bible is a book of God's actions with creation including human beings and by its very nature invites us to wrestle with the big questions that we have in life. Answers come to us as we wrestle with the context of the text itself, what other have said about the text, what relationship the text has with our faith and human experience, what we discover about values that undergird the text, and how God has acted through history including our present time. We have access to this knowledge in our Book of Common Prayer, our study of the Bible and Church History, and the many other conversations we have with scholars, biblical studies, with others as we journey through life, and by

reflecting on our human experience. I find it to be a marvelous quest that lasts a lifetime.

So today we have the wonderful and familiar image of the Mustard Seed - the tiniest of seeds that grows into a magnificent plant. We are also introduced again to the importance of parables. The images challenge our thinking. The smallest of seeds can seem so insignificant. Sometimes we think our offerings are as small. Yet we are called to sow seeds. We may not be able to see the final plant growing but we are asked to sow seeds anyway. That was the seed of discovery that my Dad sowed for me on that bus so many years ago. Everyone here has seeds to sow. We sow and God does the rest. In this image and in so many parables Jesus invited his hearers to wrestle in their meanings for our lives, not be undone by the struggles which are omnipresent and expectant, and sow the seeds anyway. The challenge for us is in part to recognize that we have unique, worthy seeds to sow as well as wondering if it is worth the effort to sow them. We might ask: Who am I amongst so many people? How can my small talent make a difference in such a large complex world in which I live? How can I move past the notion that my small gift could possibly make a difference?

Yesterday I shared some thoughts and remembrances of a man whose name is Mark. He died on April 8<sup>th</sup> of Melanoma. He was not known by many but oh how he was known by people to whom he graced their midst. He was a sower of joy. In his sowing he contributed to others' lives in such a way that will affect them and their offspring on into the future. He had been battling his disease for several years yet even in the ongoing physical diminishment of his body his spirit was continuing to sow seeds of hope, joy, love, and peace. He loved people and particularly was a help to those whose physical imitations sidelined them from others. And we are all the greater for it. While I was in Oxford, England about 20 years ago I visited a cemetery as I sometimes do. It is a way of my honoring all the people who have gone before and have given us a foundation for our living. On one of the tombstones were these words: he loved deeply and was deeply loved. That is it I thought. What a legacy! That too was Mark's legacy and can be ours as well.

We have recently celebrated Pentecost. The people had assembled to give thanks for the spring harvest and to remember the gifts given by Moses and by receiving the 10 commandments. They came from near and far. While they were assembled they experienced the power of God bringing them together in new ways. They heard their languages being spoken. What seemed to be impossible became possible. And their lives were forever changed. God's spirit dwelled amongst them and dwells among us. And to this we too ask for ourselves: what is next?

Maybe what is next is our continuing to be a community of faith who believes in miracles, trusts that what might seem to be insignificant and unimportant may be the most important, and that by sowing seeds we too might help change the world. Our sowing is not intended to be perfect. Yet our sowing helps create a way forward where God can do the rest.

This prayer written by Thomas Merton seems to say what our journey forward might well entail.

My Lord God. I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. Nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you, does in fact please you.

And I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road, though may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust you always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear for you are ever with me.

And you will never leave me to face my struggles alone.

Amen.

May we be a people of faith who dare to sow seed of love and joy as we trust that whatever small we believe our gifts to be they will be sufficient to God who loves us all beyond measure,

What are those seeds that we want to sow?