

Wise Sayings

Today is, as you know, father's day – and in connection to these readings appointed for this Third Sunday of Pentecost I want to talk about a certain wisdom that these readings give us. But first off on this Father's Day reality is that all of us had a father, some of us wonderful outstanding fathers and others, well maybe not so outstanding. Nevertheless many fathers can be known of their wisdom. Years ago Ann Landers, a nationally syndicated columnist, who died in 2002, wrote this poem about what children will say about their father.

- four years old: - My daddy can do anything.
- five years old: - My daddy knows a whole lot.
- six years old: - My dad is smarter than your dad.
- eight years old: - My dad doesn't know exactly everything.
- ten years old: - In the olden days when my dad grew up, things sure were different.
- twelve years old: - Oh, well, naturally, dad doesn't know anything about that. He is too old to remember his childhood.
- fourteen years old - Don't pay any attention to my dad. He is so old-fashioned.
- twenty-one years old - Him? My Lord, he's hopelessly out of date.
- twenty-five years old - Dad knows a little bit about it, but then he should because he has been around so long.
- thirty years old: - Maybe we should ask dad what he thinks. After all, he's had a lot of experience.
- thirty-five years old - I'm not doing a single thing until I talk to dad.
- forty years old: - I wonder how dad would have handled it. He was so wise and had a world of experience.
- fifty years old: - I'd give anything if dad were here now so I could talk this over with him. Too bad I didn't appreciate how smart he was. I could have learned a lot from him.

What do you think is special about your father? Mine taught me about the value of work, about loyalty and the value of going to church every week. Today you might think to yourself what wisdom your father gave you.

Now on to the wisdom of Mark chapter 4. Here we read two parables that Jesus shares with a group of people who gather by a lake to hear him teach. It seems to me that these two little parables offer us four wise statements to live our life by.

The first wise statement is “some of the most important things of life are invisible and they are more powerful than the things we can see.” Just a few Sundays ago we celebrated the giving of the Spirit of to the Disciples at Pentecost. The Hebrew word for Spirit is Ruah which means wind or breath. We can’t see the air, the wind, but we know it’s there. Without air we could not live, without the Spirit we could not have faith. And what goes hand in hand with this Spirit is the element of trust. Trust is something that we cannot see or feel. For example, as Christians we confess that we trust in God yet we cannot see or touch God. We trust that God is present with us and helps us accomplish our daily tasks. Trust is an important part of today’s Gospel in that a seed is planted, it grows and whether we are awake or asleep, it puts forth first a stalk, then a head, and then becomes a full grown grain. Take for example a small kernel of corn. Corn is remarkable stuff. You put a little seed in the ground in May - and with the right conditions - by September you have a plant that is over six feet high and which contains literally thousands of kernels of corn. Almost unbelievable.

The Second wise saying that that the greatest of all accomplishments comes out of the smallest and least significant things. Again from our Gospel reading Jesus says let’s take the mustard seed. It is the smallest of seeds yet it grows into a great bush, so large that birds can find shelter in its branches. Last week I was invited over to a friend of Roger Wissman for lunch and the host was showing us her rain garden in the back yard when she told me that as a little girl she through some acorns at her brother when they were kids and on that spot today stood at least a 100 foot Oak tree with a trunk of about twenty four inches in diameter.

Even Jesus' life shows how God can take small seemingly insignificant events and make them bigger than life. We are wired on big, grand and flashy. Big cars, big buildings, star power celebrities, we are impressed by big money, big fame, and big status. Yet look at what God choses to work with. Jesus was born in a barn to a carpenter and peasant girl, Jesus gathered twelve disciples all who were common ordinary people like you and me. Scriptures say over and over again that God loves the little ones, the humble ones and that God loves those people who are despised and rejected by others. The signs of the kingdom are not big churches, gold and silver, or fantastic wealth, but simple things like bread and wine, and water; simple ordinary stuff. God's work gets done through dynamic people like Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, Florence Nightingale, Sister Therese, and Desmond Tutu, but most often it is done by you and I. Whenever we help a person in need, donate to the CFLS food pantry, make sandwiches for the Lifeline faith and friends Sunday class, volunteer for a low income housing program, deliver meals on wheels, or conserve energy and eat more locally grown foods we are doing God's work in the world. 00 God's kingdom is found in the bread and the wine we share here together, in the meals we share at home, in the fellowship we have with others.

The third wise saying is, "living our faith means focusing on good not evil, believing and doing what is good." Now this may sound rather trite and simplistic but it still must be said. I am sure you all remember the story of Chicken Little – he thought the sky was going to fall in, and ran around warning everybody, he fretted and fumed and worried. Many people are like Chicken Little they look all the time at the darkness and evil in our world. Unemployment, drug addiction, crime, pollution and war haunt their waking hours. Fear is fostered in their hearts - fear of failure, fear of losing what they value, fear of being alone, fear of death. They rob themselves by focusing on what is bad, and the more they look at it the bigger it gets. Our focus needs to be

on God and on his goodness. When we do this we will bring light to others as well as discover light in ourselves.

The fourth and final wise saying is, “Be in God’s field by opening yourself to him and to his word.” Read the word, think about it, and act it out in your life. This is best achieved with others who also want to God’s kingdom to grow. Again these two parables in Mark chapter 4 remind us that the best stuff in life is invisible and seems insignificant at least in the beginning. Live a faithful life by focusing on the good and opening your life to God, and God will do the rest. God will be your protector and shield. God will bring you into the fullness of His kingdom and into the eternal life. Amen

Pastor Tom Knoll