

SO much to say, and so little time to say it. You can almost smell the waffles wafting in the air. A very happy Father's Day to ALL those who are Dads or have taken an active role in nurturing children as only a Dad can.

What a wonderful time of year for today's gospel of the sower and the seed. We hear today a much shorter version of the story of the man, who is Jesus, sowing the seed, which is the Word of God, on the land, which is the people and US, and how that seed seems to germinate and grow on its own, EVEN WHILE WE SLEEP, and the man knows not how.

Well you can check with any farmer and he can tell you the whole science behind that growth, and it doesn't necessarily happen all on its own, but with a lot of toil and sweat, prayer and the grace of God.

The grace of God – we first receive that grace at our Baptism, and then the fullness of that grace is received at our Confirmation, when we are sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, like a Mason jar of jams or vegetables that is sealed, the goodness of that grace is there within us to be used whenever called upon, always within us whether we realize it or not.

In time, that grace allows us to hear the Word of God and come to understand, thru a cultivation of FAITH, what God's plan for each of us is. Grace helps us, as Paul puts it in the second reading, to "aspire to please 'the Lord', whether we are at home (with him in heaven) or away (here on earth)." Grace helps us to know, love, and serve God in this world, so we can be with Him in the next.

And who does Jesus say is welcomed in the Kingdom of God? He describes the Kingdom as the largest of plants that puts out large branches for the birds of the sky to dwell in its shade. He doesn't specify any particular bird like a hawk or a dove, an eagle or a pigeon, just "BIRDS", all birds, all nations, all peoples, all who come to know, love, and serve God and seek rest in His shade. You heard this correctly, the Kingdom of God is open to ALL, but MANY will forsake the kingdom to satisfy their wants and desires of this present age, succumbing to the evil of self-centeredness and selfishness.

Jesus IS the fulfillment of what we heard in the reading from the Prophet Ezekiel. He is that topmost tender shoot whom God has taken from the mighty cedar, the line of King David, and planted in the earth to cover it with his shade, his love, and to profess that love to the world, first in his own ministry, then thru his Apostles, then thru their disciples, and continuing to and THRU us today, by our words and deeds. Yes, WE are called to continue Jesus' ministry today, in our time, to spread the Good News and offer comfort and rest to those who come within the shadow of love WE cast.

In today's readings we heard the use of several types of trees to describe the Kingdom of God and the spread of faith, the belief in God as Lord of all. The Mustard Plant, the Lebanon Cedar, and even a quick reference in today's psalm to the Palm Tree whose seed, the coconut, drops from its branches and somehow finds its way down to the sea, across vast oceans to far-off beaches, where IT takes root and flourishes. Trees are mighty, strong, long-living, and very useful to man's survival – a wonderful simile for God's kingdom and love.

Yet, compared to the love of God toward His creation, US, they hold little more value than to be used in a parable. By similarity, we are called to be mighty in our praise to God; strong in the profession of our faith in the face of persecution; long-living in our service to others over self; and very useful in leading souls out of the darkness of this world to everlasting LIFE in the next. We are called to be both cultivator and cultivated, to help others grow in their faith, as we ourselves grow wider and stronger in our own.