

# "Always Confident"

2 Corinthians 5:6-17 & Mark 4:26-34

June 18, 2006

I thought that it would be appropriate on the Father's Day to just share a little information that might be appropriate for the day. I understand that the celebration of Father's Day goes back "to a Sunday morning in May of 1909, when a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd was sitting in church in Spokane, Washington, listening to a Mother's Day sermon. She thought of her father who had raised her and her siblings after her mother died in childbirth, and she thought that fathers should get recognition, too. So she asked the pastor if he would give a sermon honoring fathers on her father's birthday, which was coming up in June, and the minister did. And the tradition of Father's Day caught on, though rather slowly. Mother's Day became an official holiday in 1914; Father's Day, not until 1972. Mother's Day is still the busiest day of the year for florists, restaurants and long distance phone companies. But it is on Father's Day when the most collect phone calls are made. - - - what exactly does this mean?

The apostle Paul makes an incredible statement in our second scripture reading for today. I wish that I could grasp it - I wish that it would be possible for me to say - even if were only occasionally. "So, we are always confident ....." Are you 'always confident'? Are you even occasionally 'always confident'? Frankly, it is just a whole lot easier for me to be almost always insecure.

There is a story about a father who wanted to be of more help with the care of their children. One of the ways that he suggested to his wife that he might be of help was putting the kids to bed. He decided that he would sing the kids to sleep. He even learned a few lullabies to lend some variety to the task. This was something he could do at night to help his wife out. And he kept up this task until one night he overheard his four-year-old give her younger sibling this advice, "If you pretend you're asleep," she said, "he stops."

What kind of confidence can such things instill in a person. I know that I have shared you one of my favorite "Peanuts" cartoons in which Lucy notices that Charlie Brown is wearing a bracelet and she asks about it. She notes that it looks like one of these medical alert bracelets that warn of some important medical information. When Charlie Brown indicates that that is exactly what it is, she begins to quiz him as to what his medical issue is. Is he diabetic, - NO - is he allergic to some medication - NO - - - after several tries, Lucy asks more directly - What does your medical alert bracelet say? - - to which Charlie Brown says: "Insecure".

**"So we are always confident ....." As the people of God we are called into a life of confidence. But it is not an easy thing for us to be confident in a world that seems to be out of control - in a life that is too often filled with difficult times when we do not have the answers - when we do not have the strength to solve the problems ourselves. In those moments we have the choice to face life filled with insecurity or with peace and confidence. God wants us to have confidence - over and over Jesus tells us to have peace.**

**Jesus tells a couple of parables in our Gospel text for today. They are parables about God and His kingdom. They are parables that we, in farm country should be able to understand. The parables talk about seed scattered on the ground. We have scattered a lot of seed on the ground in recent weeks. Farmers in our area have brought out the big equipment - they have dealt with the hard ground left in the wake of a long winter - they have used all of their know how to fertilize just right and the seed has been planted. But then there is nothing to do but wait to see what happens. The parable tells how you might just as well go about daily life - sleep and rise - because now it is up to God. And God will take care of it. The best scientific knowledge can identify everything that happens as the seed sprouts and grows but no one but God can make it happen. Ultimately, farming requires trust in God. Anyone who plants a seed can spend a lot of time fretting about the growth of the seed - or you can do all that you can and then get a good nights sleep knowing that God alone gives the growth. Ultimately living life requires trusting God. We too can only do what we can as we face the challenges of life and then we need to lie back and get some sleep knowing that God is on duty.**

**Do you often consider what an amazing job God does. In the second parable that Jesus tells, He speaks of a tiny mustard seed and how God grows it into a huge shrub that becomes the nesting ground for the birds that seek shelter in it's large branches. Mustard shrubs are not really a part of our life experience here as they would have been for the people to whom Jesus spoke. I read about a similar example that really impressed me. An article that I read talked about a seed that the Guinness Book of World Records reports to weigh only 1/6000 of an ounce. It is the seed of the giant sequoia tree. I don't know if you have ever been to California's "Sequoia National Park" - but trust me, those trees are impressive. The Article that I read said that one of those giant sequoia - specifically the one named the "General Sherman" is the most massive living thing on the planet. That one tree is 274.9 feet tall and has a 'girth' of 102.6 feet at the base. It is estimated to weigh 5,512,000 pounds [2756 tons] and is approximately 2,200 years old. - - - Can we trust God to grow a seed? Can we trust God to provide a kingdom? Can we trust God when the struggles of life are beyond our control?**

**So we are always confident. It is difficult when we like to be in control and when we want to make all seeds grow the way we want them to grow. But true confidence comes in trusting that God knows how to grow a seed. God know how to establish a kingdom. And when we face the most difficult times in our life we know that**

**whether the situation turns out the way we want or not - even when it comes to the true ultimate question of whether we live or die - finally God is in control.**

**I understand that before James A. Garfield was elected as President of the United States, was president of Hiram College in Ohio. The story is told that one day a father asked Garfield if there were a short-cut whereby his son could get through college in less than the usual four years. He wanted his Son to get on with making money. The college president gave this reply, "Of course there is a way; it all depends on what you want your boy to do. When God wants to grow an oak tree, he takes 100 years. When he wants to make a squash, he only takes two months."**

**Trusting God is not always easy. We want to grow the seeds of life our way. But God know how to grow a tree and establish a kingdom - and care for His people. He invites us to become a new creation - to life in confidence and peace.**

**AMEN**