

June 14  
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Calvary Lutheran Church  
Mark 4:26-34

## **“A letter to a newborn”**

Dear Sophie,

Welcome to the world!

We love you.

And if mom and dad’s patience ever seems to run thin in the years to come, especially about 13 years from now, I’d bet you have several hundred others listening, who would offer you their best at the drop of a hat.

You see, Soph, we are blessed. We are a people of God, and we have one another, and we have this incredible treasure and grace from God. I hope we can always start by acknowledging that – and being grateful for our blessings.

Sophie I am writing to on the occasion of my return to the pulpit, for the 1<sup>st</sup> time since you arrived over 6 weeks ago. I figured now would be a good time to remind you that there are only 6 shopping days left until Father’s Day...

Actually, if you are like me, the youngest of three siblings, you will leave those decisions to your brother Daniel, or more likely, to the eldest, Eva – who I think now has in her piggy bank, a grand total of \$.37;

I won’t get my hopes up too high...

Each week, Sophie, I spend some time exploring with the people of God something we call the Holy Scriptures.

It’s a fancy church word we use to talk about: our favorite book.

This week in the book, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to little tiny seeds growing in the ground. I couldn’t help but think of you. A little tiny baby. Growing by the minute. By the second! By the time I get home to hold you again this afternoon, you’ll probably be just a little larger than last night when I kissed you good night.

That's part of the miracle of the power of God that Jesus is trying to teach us about. The miracle of growth taking place in our lives, even when we may not be aware of it.

And the growth isn't limited to physical growth, but includes spiritual growth as well...

Let's take a look at the specifics of what the book says... one part reads:

"The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup> and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how."

Sleep and rise night and day...

[sigh] dearest Sophie, let's talk about this sleeping at night thing...in case you haven't figured it out yet - there is a pattern most of us follow - that is - during the day - there is sunshine and light - our eyes are open! We're playing, we're working, we're awake!

In the evening and during the night - it's dark, the stars and the moon come out - eventually we turn out the lights, and shut our eyes.

Awake during the day.

Sleeping during the night.

This is the pattern, dear Sophie, that we are hoping you figure out --- real soon!

Ah, I guess we will continue to be patient with you

Because the parents I've talked with, confirm that even college students

Haven't figured this pattern out yet!

They know of the pattern - but certainly have not mastered it!

It seems that the point of the first part of the parable is TO KNOW that growth happens - even though the one who planted it - knows not how.

The growth is seen as a miracle.

It's seen as a gift from the creator.

This parable reminds us about God's grace

It tells us that our worth is not a human achievement

But a divine gift!

The seed is designed for growth

Even if the farmer sleeps on the wrong side of the bed and wakes up grumpy

The growth happens!

Even if the farmer's tires on his tractor are under inflated- the growth still happens!

Even if the farmer doesn't plant the seeds in a perfectly straight row - the growth still happens.

Our status before God is not a human accomplishment

But a divine gift - this is why we sing about

God's amazing grace...

This is why we baptize infants - in fact, Sophie, this morning three of your classmates - the class of, get this, class of 2027, will be/were baptized. You and your classmates are born into a world where accelerating change seems to be the norm. After all, Conan O'Brien has replaced Jay Leno, and digital broadcasting has replaced analog...making those rabbit ears on top of your parents' TV obsolete...but we prefer to think of them as - collector's items!!! Or antique treasures...

Each of you in the class of 2027 will face many changes in life, but with God's word planted in you, you may know of God's grace, and that one unchanging and unfailing norm, that you can return to again and again.

This parable dear Sophie also tells us of the importance of doing our part, and then allowing God to do God's part.

Just as a seed grows and bears fruit

So too the kingdom of God grows among us – within us!

But there have to be seed planters.

The work of the organizations like Ken Crest, and the others represented by Lutheran Charities [mentioned in today's Temple Talk] are representative of this need for seed planters; for people willing to step forth and do the ministry so needed in the world.

So too, Nobel Peace Prize winner , Mother Teresa of Calcutta, knew of the need for seed planting – she began her orphanage with such a vision. One day she told her superiors, "I have three pennies and a dream from God to build an orphanage."

"Mother Teresa," her superiors chided gently, "you cannot build an orphanage with three pennies...with three pennies you can't do anything."

"I know," she said, smiling, "but with God and three pennies I can do anything."

Three pennies

A mustard seed

A dream

A ministry...God knows what is possible.

One of the classic interpretations of this Biblical passage about the seed growing automatically was written by Martin Luther over 500 years ago. Martin was a pastor, like papa. He also was a husband and a father. It's evident that Luther trusted deeply in the power of God at work in the world. It's evident, because he said things like this: "After I preach my sermon on Sunday, when I return home, I drink my little glass of Wittenberg beer and I just let the gospel run its course." I like that. Luther said that after he pounded on the pulpit and expounded the gospel, he would go home and pull out the Sunday newspaper, put his feet up and enjoy the afternoon. Luther knew that the power of the sermon was not based on the power of his theological acuity. He knew that the power of the sermon was not based on his eloquence or his abilities. He knew that the power of the sermon would have no effect whatsoever unless the very Word of God got into a person's heart. Luther knew that he couldn't do that. But rather it was the Holy Spirit who does that. That's our prayer for you and for everyone, that the word of God will be planted within you and take root...

You may ask, little one, why we have such confidence in these sayings?

We have confidence because Jesus, the one who said these things, gives us more than just sayings

He gives us his very self

Through his teachings, healings,

His death and resurrection

God seeks to enter every human heart

In word and sacrament Jesus comes to us

In prayer and praise Jesus speaks with us

In song and in silence, Jesus communes with us

He is the seed planted firmly within you

He is the growth in grace promised to you

He is the guiding light leading you through the dark of night

He is the source of shelter and shade

Our refuge from the storms of this life

SO, eat, sleep and grow.

And then eat some more;

And sleep some more;

And continue to grow...

Let God's grace pull you into the future

And us along with you.

And now to God who is able to accomplish abundantly beyond all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory, now and forever. Amen.

