

June 17, 2018

Mark 4:26-34

Have you had an overwhelming experience of presence of God? How do you tell others about it, so they can experience it?

Jesus' parables explain religious experiences that cannot be explained by words, logic

I found myself floundering with this parable of the sower

How is untended scattered seed like God's kingdom, God's reign in our lives?

Does God's reign just come upon us? Grow in us? Or, do we have to do something to nurture the experience in our lives?

As I struggled with these questions this past week, I received an email from my youngest brother, now a pastor of a church in southwestern Indiana.

- Tell the story of fostering Aaliyah and Luis.
- How do you not feel like you failed, as a parent, a father, especially in this age of the changing role of how to be a father?

He sent an email to his brothers just to say he now has a new perspective on Father's Day

and wanted to tell his brothers, all of whom are fathers, he gets it, he gets us, he gets his own father, and he is grateful.

He concluded the email with these words:

“This year has permanently changed my life and my marriage and my relationships with others, but all in a good way. It felt like a baptism by fire at times, but there was real love present, too. **Real love and grace changes who we are. We cannot be in its presence and not be changed by it.**”

In an experiential, very hard to explain way, his Father's Day message gave me insight into Jesus' parable.

The foster children came with extreme behavior issues, many of which are related to the environment they were raised in, but there are always genetic factors involved.

This brought up “nature verses nurture”.

No clear answer.

So intertwined, interdependent we can never know.

A quote, from Gabor Mate:

“In the real world there is no nature verses nurture argument, only **an infinitely complex and moment-by-moment interaction between genetic and environmental effects.**”

The sower sows the seed;  
it has a genetic code;

the ground – and the sower – feed the seed,  
nurture the seed

When harvest time comes, we may go to collect, but what we receive – is it due to the genetic quality of the seed or the care given by earth and caretaker?

Does it matter which it was, even if it is a disaster?

We can be quick to judge ourselves and others for things that are beyond one’s knowledge and one’s control.

Why are we so compelled to judge others? Do we really know all the facts?

I can tell you honestly, on this Father’s Day, my father was far from perfect.

My brother over estimated both his abilities and the problems foster children can bring

The results were far from perfect

Yet, in the end, all that matters is love and grace.

How Aaliyah and Luis will grow and develop time will tell

But the seed of love and grace have been planted.

We must continue to do our best, without blame or shame, and turn the rest over to God.

On this Father’s Day, this is the message I need to put my relationship with my father into proper perspective.

In the seeds of love and grace we discover that the kingdom of God, the reign of God is all around us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.