

Grace Lutheran Church

The Rev. P. Stevens Lynn – Sermon

Sunday, June 17, 2018

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Mark 4:26-34

*Grace to you and Peace from God Our Father and
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

Pastor Warren Karshin was my confirmation pastor. He died last month and I miss him. Pastor Karshin came here in 2012 to help celebrate my 30th anniversary of ordination. He told a story about me and a large umbrella – some of you remember? Pastor Karshin was a person who loved the church. He was a humble man who liked to work behind the scene. He loved to work in the background to make sure all was in place for ministry programs to succeed, and he would constantly reflect praise given to him and give it to others who worked beside him. This was who he was – A quiet servant in the church of Jesus Christ – working silently to help things grow and work and succeed. A great example for me.

I have watched many people work this way – many here at Grace – and I must say – and she will be mad I said this – a good example of a person who works humbly and quietly behind the scenes is my wife, Lois. That's her style.

Humbly working, silently behind the scenes, making things grow and work and come to fruition. That's what I heard as I studied our Gospel lesson for today. In this Gospel, I see Jesus telling us that God's kingdom is like someone scattering seed on the ground. They would scatter the seed, then go about other business, and as they did other things, the seed would sprout and grow, and no one really watched or saw it happen. The other example was the mustard seed – same thing – smallest of seeds growing silently and without fanfare, whether one watched it or not – it grew into a large and vibrant bush. All this, I believe, points to how our God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit works in and among us here in the church, our personal lives and the world. Often times when life is happening to us, we wonder, “Where is God?” But I believe God is present working – silent as light – behind and below and around us making things happen, that often we can't see or understand. But often, when we look back, sometimes years later, then we see God's hand – shaping, molding, supporting us, carrying us – helping things to happen through the good and hard times in our lives. God is there, often silent as light, and just as present and effective. It's just as it is happening, it can be hard to see – just as hard as watching for a seed to sprout and grow into its future.

The best way to see and understand how God works that way – is to experience it, to see it. God has allowed me to see that. God has revealed God's self to me in so many marvelous ways – Ways I oftentimes did not see as they

were unfolding. But I can see them now as I look back – I see a finely orchestrated tapestry of how things so wonderfully fit together in my life.

My parents, my neighborhood, sports, friends, how God helped and guided me through college, my job right after college as a social worker, Lois coming into my life – I thought this little man would never get married – and how Lois has helped me live and thrive and do ministry – and she helped to make it so good and abundant along the way, and the three parishes I have served culminating – God called me to all of them – and they were and are., such a perfect fit for me during the different stages of my life and ministry. You – you – are my family here. If I had to have my back troubles and my legs being so weak due to the nerve loss and surgeries, I am blessed to have had it happen here. I am sorry it did – but you have been so good and understanding and accepting of my mobility limitations. My back and leg issues happened here where I had staff around me. I wasn't alone like in my other 2 calls – so I had Pastor Louder, Pastor Alison and Pastor Schul and Cindy and Vicar Ariel and Peter and today, Dennis, helping me and enabling me to continue to do ministry, and I didn't have to resign. I would have in my first two calls. Thank you. But I see all that as part of this amazing tapestry God has woven and made for me all of my life – this is God working behind the scenes quietly sowing seeds, having them sprout and grow into a mature and healthy plant. I see that work as all God, working quietly to love me and help me.

Now, what about Grace? How has God been working here – quietly, humbly behind the scenes. For those of you who have been around awhile – look back, think, see through the eyes of faith. You will see God planting the seed in 1898 (I know – none of you were around then – but you know if happened!) And then God using Pastor Harkins’ long and stable, faithful ministry growing Grace’s congregation into a large and vibrant church, then Pastor Bringman – leading and overseeing the building’s planning and construction. I know that was hard. Then Pastor Hershey serving as an interim, then Pastor Miller’s tenure with Nancy Gable and Ruth Jensen and Janis Sloka and Lutheran Campus Ministry always a partner with Grace and now me and all who have worked with me as we did the building project and worked our way through a difficult issue of inclusion and welcome to all people. Think of all the ministries God has done – quietly, humbly and faithfully through Grace Lutheran Church – through you – and now it continues as you call Pastor Schul and you have a bright future. Those of you who have joined in the past few years and don’t remember much of that history – you know Grace now – a very young congregation, vibrant and growing – much younger than we were even ten years ago. Think of our choirs, our organists, new and former, our youth and family ministry – Super Wednesday. This was a wonderful place for everyone – And God has made this so, working quietly through people – you – behind the scenes – just like a seed growing – giving us all we need to nourish us

and pulling out weeds – helping us work through problems and issues that may hurt us. God quietly revealing God’s love to us in Jesus Christ – all the time. Jesus building God’s kingdom through us. Thank you, Jesus, for making us part of it.

And last, you personally. How is God quietly working behind the scenes like a growing seed in your life? Think back – Ways God has been and is behind the scenes in your life. Don’t you see it? All your blessings and how things have worked out for you. And I know life isn’t always good and certainly not easy. I know that. But for those of us who see through the eyes of faith – It is during those hard and traumatic times that God is working with and for and around you. Hard times that deal with your health, your kids, your parents, your job, issues here at church, or in your marriage, or during a divorce or custody battle – or even for those who, have before, never really been accepted by the church. It is during and in those hard times – that hard patch – that God is there. Why does God allow such bad patches? I can’t totally answer that. But I do know from my life that God is active behind the scenes, quietly and through miraculous things and in common things like other people around us – carrying you and me through those hard patches.

If you are in the middle of a hard patch now – look around – watch – listen – God is working – and if you don’t see it now, I promise someday you will. God through Jesus loves you. Know that, believe that, trust that. Look for all the ways

Jesus is loving you and caring for you, in those quiet but steady and behind the scene ways. *Amen.*