

*<Children's Time>*

Let us pray now, for all fathers.

<Prayer from UM Book of Worship p.441, as taken from Book of Blessings, U.S.A., 20<sup>th</sup> Cent., Alt.>

- For our fathers, who have given us life and love, that we may show them reverence and love, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For fathers who have lost a child through death, that their faith may give them hope, and their family and friends support and console them, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For men, though without children of their own, who like fathers have nurtured and care for us, we pray to the Lord . . .
- For fathers, who have been unable to be a source of strength, who have not responded to their children and have not sustained their families, we pray to the Lord . . .
- God our Father, in your wisdom and love you made all things. Bless these men, that they may be strengthened as Christian fathers. Let the example of their faith and love shine forth.
- Grant that we, their sons and daughters, may honor them always with a spirit of profound respect. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Gospel lesson

We continue in the Gospel of Mark today, as Jesus has been teaching from a boat, telling a variety of parables to the crowd on the shore.



*picture from MMMS collection*

### Mark 4:26-34

(NRSV)

<sup>26</sup> He also said, "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.

<sup>28</sup> The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.

<sup>29</sup> But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

<sup>30</sup> He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?

<sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth;

<sup>32</sup> yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

<sup>33</sup> With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it;

<sup>34</sup> he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Hymn “Father, We Thank You”

UMH #565>

## (Interactive) Message: All-Powerful to Save



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/ascribe-to-god/fourth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fourth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

All-Powerful Creator, as we take time now to further consider today’s scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may learn to trust more fully in You and (in Your grace) to live better with others. Amen.

We reach the end of the “Ascribe to God” series with “All-Powerful to Save”:

“As we conclude this series that interweaves the doctrine of God with the Psalms, reflect on belief and knowledge as partners in the Christian life.

Belief leads us to pursue questions that deepen our

knowledge, and knowledge informs the shape and character of our belief. Growing in these is part of living our faith.”



picture from <https://www.wincalendar.com/Holiday-Calendar/June-2024>

Does anyone know what this Wednesday coming up is?  
<Let them respond>

Why celebrate Juneteenth? What is it about?  
<Let them respond>

Is everyone today happy that Juneteenth is a thing?  
<Let them respond>

It is easy to condemn those who long for a return to the “Old South,” and I certainly think we should be looking forward to more equality rather than back to slavery and the demeaning of those different from us.

Yet before you get ready to throw stones, I have to ask: have you ever found it hard to embrace change, or wished a return to old ways? <Let them respond>



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/yo-samuel-saul/>

Samuel was struggling in sorrow about Saul. Saul looked kingly and faithful when anointed, but he was not a good king for the Israelites because he sought

worldly gains instead of doing as the Lord had commanded. Saul acted as though God should serve him.

You can hear the people looking for God to be a cosmic butler in the psalm: “Give victory to the king, O Lord; answer us when we call.”

But God refused to let the wayward king be in control much as a good father denies the unhealthy demands of an immature and unwise child. God emphasized who was in control by unseating the tall king with a youngster, almost a nobody – an eighth son had few prospects in life after all his older brothers got their share; this one got stuck in the fields tending sheep while his brothers went to the special event.

But the power of God makes greatness possible from the most unlikely sources. Jesus described it as the seed growing; though the farmer knew not how it grew, he reaped its harvest when it was ready.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/parable-sower-seed/>

Here’s a question (please answer): when were you last amazed by the power of God working to make something happen in this community, something you thought unlikely if not impossible? <Let them respond>

God is working in our lives, teaching about the

kingdom of heaven and enabling planted seeds to grow. They thrive best, like the mustard seed into a shrub with large branches, when we keep our faith and focus on what Jesus taught, listening to the Holy Spirit.

Our Father loves us and seeks to nurture us, even when we think God is unfair or denying us what we “should” have. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about his being “always confident” because of faith in Christ. Paul knew fear of the Lord – any child subject to a parent’s discipline can know fear – but trusted in the love of Christ, so through God’s power he became a new creation: just as we are called to be made new by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are not to focus backward and try to recreate the past. We are called to look at our present-day life and the needs of the people in our midst – in our families, in our church, in our community, in our state, in our country, in our world. Each person has cares and concerns, problems to address.



*picture from personal creation*

Are we able to fix the world ourselves? Of course not! But we know a guy... Someone all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving, and always present, waiting for us to listen to what Our Father in heaven tells us to do. And when we really focus on what He teaches us,

we can then step out in courage and faith to strive for a better world – confident as a child secure in the knowledge that their loving parent is there for them.

Juneteenth is about celebrating freedom from slavery and oppression (in all forms). Pride month is about celebrating equal rights for all gender identities. Father's Day is about celebrating men who enable children to grow despite not really knowing how those kids become the adults they turn into.



picture from

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In all of these things, we know God is at work and therefore we can give thanks to God for His almighty power. Secure in the knowledge that God is helping you grow, this week look for where you can share God's boundless love with someone else (especially someone you do not usually interact with much or who can use an extra helping hand):

- † Share a cup of coffee or a meal
- † Spend time with them in other ways, such as a car ride, a hike, a phone call
- † Listen unplugged – no phone messaging, no other distractions
- † Work with them on a project – yours, theirs, or perhaps some volunteer work – or maybe even plot something new between you that can benefit the

## community

Celebrate joys, commiserate woes, laugh a little, and then - before parting - take time to pray for each other's concerns. Think of the praying as verbally anointing each other with the Holy Spirit, blessing one another for joyous life in Christ as our heavenly Father would have us live.

And then let God's power work. Amen.

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