I Samuel 15:34 – 16:13

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

Mark 4:26-34

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus speaks to us in parables. He gives us two; they’re both about seeds. One is about scattering seed; the other is about mustard seeds.

Writer and teacher Megan McKenna says parables are "a trapdoor into another world" and that we may find it is not where we want to live. It may make demands on us. It may tell us things we’d rather not know, like how children are being forcibly separated from their parents after arriving in this country without proper documentation. Still, Megan McKenna says, “Parables aren’t just another story: they are the truth of our own lives.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

So there is the story of a mouse. She’s not a church mouse, she’s a farm mouse. One day she looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. What food might it contain, she wondered? What delicacy? The mouse was devastated to learn that it was a mousetrap.

Retreating quickly to the farmyard, she proclaimed the warning: “There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!”

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, “Miss Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to hens like me. I cannot be bothered.”

The mouse ran to the pig and said, “There’s a mousetrap in the house! A mousetrap in the house!” The pig was very sympathetic, but said, “I am so very sorry, Miss Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my proper pig prayers.”

The mouse turned to the cow and said, “There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!” The cow said, “Wow, Miss Mouse. I’m sorry for you, but it’s no skin off my bovine nose.” So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer’s mousetrap alone.

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house — the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer’s wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught.

The snake bit the farmer’s wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital, but she returned home with a fever. Everyone knows you treat fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard to butcher the chicken.

But his wife’s sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer took his gun to the farmyard and butchered the pig.

The farmer’s wife did not get well; she died. So many people came to her funeral, that the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat to feed them all.

The mouse looked upon it all with great sadness from her crack in the wall. Never could she have imaged such tragedy could come from one tiny mousetrap.

We are all connected. When a Honduran man’s 11-year-old son is taken away from him after they illegally crossed the Rio Grande, that’s my son. That’s my father. Forcibly removing young children from their parents who are awaiting asylum hearings has led to horrors. Two months ago, a high-ranking official of the Department of Health and Human Services told a Senate hearing that his agency could not account for 1475 children separated from their families between October and December.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In Brownsville, Texas, an abandoned Walmart has been converted into a home for nearly 1500 boys aged 10-to-17 who were caught illegally crossing the border. When U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon showed up unannounced to tour the facility, he was turned away by police escort.[[3]](#footnote-3)

We don’t want to hear this. Not on a beautiful Sunday morning. Not on a day when we welcome into the Body of Christ a newly ordained priest. Actually, we don’t ever want to hear such things. But we are all connected. That is my child who has been lost in the system. That is your child.

But you say – *we all say* – “What can I do? I am only one person with no particular power or influence.” If anybody doubts the power of one, that person has never been alone in a room at night with a mosquito!

Think on the mustard seed. “It is the smallest of all the seeds,” says Jesus, “But it becomes the greatest of all shrubs.” Do not minimize the importance of any one, small thing you do for the sake of what is right.

Go online and become informed. Put your name on a citizens’ lobbying list to receive email petitions protesting such policies. Talk to a staffer of one of your Congressional members. Write a letter to the editor. Attend prayer vigils for immigrant rights. Use your voice. Show up.

In fact, today in Grand Junction, people of conscience will gather at the steps of the federal building downtown at 1pm. As a group we can use our voice to say families should not be separated by ICE – *Immigration and Customs Enforcement*. Father’s Day is a time to celebrate families. What a powerful witness we can offer today to challenge the unnecessary separation of families.

The parable of the mustard seed is a trapdoor into another world. Parables aren’t just pithy stories: they are the truth of our own lives. The unblinking truth of the tiny mustard seed growing into a great bush is that you matter. What you do matters, small as you are; insignificant as you are. What you don’t do matters. Evil prevails when good people do nothing.

Above all, please do not dismiss this as just another partisan, political issue. Certainly it will be framed that way. It will be used by politicians to further their own political parties, be they Republican or Democrat. Look beyond that. Look beyond that and see the four-year-old being taken from her mother. See the undernourished, young father who cannot fathom – in a language he doesn’t understand – why his 11-year-old son has been taken away just because they were hungry.

That is your son. That is your father. We are all connected. And this isn’t a political issue. It is a human issue. That makes it a God issue. God has given us the means to remedy what is wrong in our world through the mustard seed. That tiny speck represents the abundance of God and goodness when planted in the soil. The immense generatively of God; of the universe comes along behind us and multiplies our meager efforts, but only when we do them.

Go online. Become informed. Sign petitions. Attend prayer vigils. Write your member of Congress – an email will do just fine! Write a letter to the editor. Join me today at 1pm at the federal building downtown. What happens to an illegal immigrant happens to you because we are all connected.

1. From McKenna’s *Reading Mark in the Shadow of the Cross*, quoted in Kathryn Matthews, “Sermon Seeds,” www.ucc.org/worship\_samuel\_sermon\_seeds\_june\_17\_2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jessica Goldstein, May 26, 2018, https://thinkprogress.org/as-ice-separates-children-from-parents-at-the-border-public-outrage-grows-c624e69cd43f/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Manny Fernandez, June 14, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/14/us/family-separation-migrant-children-detention.html [↑](#footnote-ref-3)