



June 20, 2021

Proverbs 4:1-4, Psalm 103: 13-22, Mark 4:35-41

Planter

Prioritizer

Pointer to the Power

The Rev. Alfred T. K. Zadig, Jr.

Michael Packard. On this Fathers Day, it doesn't matter how good of a father or father figure you are, you will never compete with 56 year old Michael Packard. Men we don't have a chance. Packard is that Cape Cod commercial lobster diver who while lobster hunting last week somehow ends up in a whales mouth...and in the spirit of Jonah, survives! Seriously men, how do we compete with that? Hear it from Packard himself who told the press:

"A humpback whale tried to eat me. I was in his closed mouth for 30 seconds, thinking, I'm in the mouth of a whale with its mouth shut. He is going to swallow me. This is how I'm going to die! But the whale eventually surfaced, shook its head and spit me out. White water everywhere. I am bruised but have no broken bones."

All I can say is...wow! He is legend!! For Packard it shot his fatherhood credibility into the stratosphere! You see, Packard has two teenage sons, ages 12 and 16. Imagine the new authority he has in the house!

- Son, take out the trash,
 - "no dad I don't feel like it..."
- Son, I survived the mouth of a whale, for goodness sakes--
- Take out the trash!

And of course, the stories these boys will tell their children: "Way back in 2021, your grandfather was in the mouth of a daggum whale-and lived!"

And just think of the Marketing potential!

- Little Packard action figures
- Packard comic books with full color illustrations
- Bracelets with, "what would Packard do?"
- The new book called: "Packard, the Jonah of our day"
- And of course, there must be an app for all that!

Packard even makes today's boat rescue story from Mark's Gospel seem boring! No, men, there is no competing with Packard!

That said, Happy Father's Day everyone! Yes, Father's Day, where we reflect on our Earthly fathers, all the father figures in our life, and most importantly, our eternal Father Jesus. But just because I'm preaching on fatherhood, doesn't mean I'm not speaking to each of you.

In addition to speaking today to:

- Fathers...
- Brand new
- And soon to be fathers
- Father figures, like god-fathers, uncles, and mentors

I'm also speaking to women, yes even single women, to give you a vision of what to look for in a Christian man! And to our children, what I pray you will look for in your fathers.

I want to use Mark 4, to get us moving. In Mark 4, we see Jesus doing three things that speak directly to fatherhood. In fact, to keep it memorable, three things that begin with 'P' - the three P's of fatherhood from Mark 4. And I want to pick up where Fr. Ted left off in his sermon last week.

Last week, our theme from Mark 4 verse 30 was the mustard seed, where Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that when grown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants, and forms large branches so birds of the air can nest under its shade. When I think of fatherhood, the first P is one of a planter. Planting seeds of faith into the next generation so that next generation grows up in the Lord! Planting faith into every child. How? Planting by praying with your children daily, and planting by praying for your children daily. Each day as I pray for my children, I'm praying for '4' specific seeds to grow in them:

First seed: That they would love Jesus above all earthly loves

Second seed: That they would marry a repentant believer of Jesus

Third seed: That they would be involved in active ministry

Fourth seed: That they would love their parents and siblings! No estrangement!

Because in the words of David in Psalm 126...You reap what you sow!

Repeated in Proverbs 22, Train up a child in the way they should go and even when they are old, they will not depart from it!

- Plant by praying for
- Plant by praying with children
- Plant by reading scripture daily
- Plant by bringing them to church...

Fathers, you are seed planters! Women, look for this trait in the man you marry!

In fact, today as we baptize George Riley, all of us are going to be asked to be seed planters.

I will ask all of you: Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support George in his life in Christ? As seed planters with boldness we say: We will!

Jesus was a seed planter, everywhere he went, planting seeds of faith.

But the second 'P' is as critical. Jesus prioritizes his time with the disciples by taking them out onto the sea, why? To deliberately find rest and teach. Jesus constantly prioritized the time of the disciples by getting them away in boats to teach them. Likewise, fathers, Do you have what I call boat time, where we make a priority to:

- Go out beyond the crowds
- Beyond your job
- Beyond the tyranny of the urgent
- Stepping away and stepping into the intimacy of Jesus?

- Prioritizing the teaching element of the faith
- Using a daily devotional with your kids and grand kids
- Intimacy with the word of God!

But let me take a time out and speak directly to all children and all people with parents here today:

In the spirit of Proverbs 4:

- Prioritize the teaching of your father
- By giving attention to the instruction you've been given.
- Don't resent that prioritized time away,
- For as Proverbs says,
- Obeying your father's teaching means you won't trip up
- You won't stumble in the challenges of life.

Jesus relentlessly prioritized time with the disciples.

- Fathers as seed planters
- Fathers as prioritizers
- And finally, fathers as pointers to power.

And that takes us to the great Michael Packard-like rescue story on the sea. Here another rescue is about to take place, on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level, surrounded by hills. This is important because the effect of its depth, with the combination of the hills, even to this day makes for sudden, frequent, and violent storms. This is what happens in verse 37, A fierce gale comes up, complete with water breaking over and filling the boat. And the disciples yell out, "Jesus don't you care we're about to die!" Jesus calmly does one thing. Before he communicates back to the disciples, Jesus immediately points them to his power by rebuking the wind and the sea, and as the bible says, the Sea of Galilee turns into Lake Placid.

Even when we plant seeds of faith, even when we prioritize time to teach our next generation, there will always be powerful storms that come in like the Sea of Galilee, from out of nowhere. We may not be stuck in a whale's mouth, but other storms will come our way and into the lives of our children:

- Relational betrayals
- Financial pressures
- Academic disasters

In those moments, instead of going horizontal or even postal to solve the problem, as pointers to the power of Jesus, we go vertical, to defeat those storms. Pointing to the power of Jesus to defeat the earthly storms. How? In the name of Jesus, peace - be still. Personally, this is something that comes very hard for me. I tend to first try to solve the issue, instead of first invoking the power of Jesus Christ. Pointing to the power of Jesus is a learned discipline. A discipline that when in the storm, we stop to pray:

- Jesus you are sovereign
- Jesus you've got this one too
- I don't need to worry!
- Peace - be still.

You see, as fathers, everything we do teaches. Everything we say or do will either help or hinder their faith. The discipline of being a relentless pointer to the power of Jesus Christ.

- Fathers as seed planters
- Fathers as prioritizers
- Fathers as pointers to the eternal power of Jesus.

I know it's possible to hear that list and think:

- I'm a failure
- I never planted, prioritized or pointed

My friends, you may be here with regrets and unfinished business:

- In your own father-hood
- With your own father
- Or even with your eternal father

If that's you, let me point you to the story of Michelle Pepe. Some months ago, Pepe traveled from Boston to Florida for her mother's 80th birthday. When she did, she believed she unknowingly transmitted the Covid virus to her father. Weeks later, her dad Bernie died.

Pepe was quoted as saying:

"Nobody's ever said, 'This is your fault and you gave it to him.' But I know it's true. I know I couldn't save him. It's just something I'm going to have to go to the grave with. I was in a real funk for a long time, but then one of my daughters said to me, 'Mommy, we thought that we lost our grandfather, but we didn't realize we also lost our mom.'"

If you have unfinished business with your dad, or yourself...

If your heart is filled with regret...

Or if you're thinking, I don't have a Michael Packard kind of story!

Today is the day to release, forgive, reset, and start anew as planter, prioritizer, and provider. After all, no matter how good or not your dad was or is, no matter how good or not you've been as a father, we are only stand-ins for our eternal father, Jesus Christ, the ultimate planter, prioritizer, and source of our power.

But I'm also here to say to you:

- Don't be discouraged,
- Don't give up on being these '3' P's!

Why? Let me be clear. We want to spend eternity with our children and grandchildren!! And these '3' P's could very well determine whether they will be in heaven or not!

My favorite passage of scripture is 1 John 3, "I have no greater joy than to know my children are walking in the truth!"

Join me, through the Holy Spirit as fellow:

- Planters
- prioritizers
- And pointers to the power of Jesus Christ.