

Homily for the 7th Sunday after Trinity
Matthew 13 31 to 33 44 to 52

In our Gospel reading today we are given five parables about the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed.

I suppose I could be called a part-time gardener.

By that I mean I enjoy sitting in the garden looking at the plants and flowers and I enjoy doing a bit of gardening when I have the time.

I guess I would enjoy gardening if I only had more time.

I suppose the question is - do I know what I am doing? The answer is - sometimes!

I treat gardening a bit like I treat Chess - as a game of chance!

It never ceases to amaze me that those little seeds can turn into wonderful plants.

In years gone by Max and I have grown Sun Flowers. They grow into huge plants with massive flowers.

Amazing!

Amazing to think that when we plant those seeds there is the potential for such a huge flower to grow.

It seems there is an amazing plan all wrapped up in one little seed but that little seed has to be given the chance to grow. It has to be planted!

Julian of Norwich lived in the fourteenth century. One day she held a tiny hazelnut seed in her hand and she wondered how it could survive. How could such a small thing live in this great universe?

She came to three conclusions:-

God made it.

God loves it.

God Keeps it.

At the same time she wrote:-

God is our maker.

God loves us.

God keeps us.

What does Jesus say about the kingdom of heaven?

The first parable, the parable of the mustard seed, is about how something so small can grow into the largest of all the garden plants.

It seems the tiny seed grows so much that the birds are able to nest in its branches.

So it's about growth but it's also about hospitality towards "the birds of the air."

I suppose all the different species of birds" could

be seen as a symbol of all the nations of the world finding their place in the tree.

Though the Kingdom starts from something that appears to be so small there is tremendous potential for growth.

However, we need to remember that the seed has first to be planted

The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast.

Like the seed it is amazing that just a small amount of yeast can transform the dough.

We know there is an amazing difference between unleavened bread which is hard like a biscuit and leavened bread which is soft and light.

The difference is the transforming power of the yeast.

There is an interesting picture here because, I understand yeast, in Biblical times, was usually added from an existing batch of bread.

This gives us a graphic illustration of how one generation can hand on the transforming power, the yeast, of God to the next.

I rather like that!

Yeast has another quality when it is added to the dough - it's active!

It doesn't let the dough stay as it was. It's a bit of disturbing influence because it makes the dough rise and become active.

There are occasions when we have to do some disturbing!

The next two parables:-

The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure in a field.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls

These are about the hidden quality of the Kingdom.

The treasure in the field was lying there waiting to be discovered. It has the potential of changing the finder's life beyond their dreams and because of that he is willing to sell all he has for it.

I guess it raises the question for each of us.

Are we willing to trade the possessions of today for the treasures of eternity?

In another way:- there is little use in treasure if we have lost our soul in gaining it!

In this parable the treasure was stumbled upon but the pearl was looked for!

The merchant was searching for a fine pearl.

I suppose the question to ask is:-

How much time do we spend looking for ways to enrich our lives with the things of God?

Are we willing to give up the minor treasures of this world for the treasure of God?

It has been said:- Quote:-

Many things in our lives are precious.

Art and music, fine clothes and good food, foreign travel, a comfortable home, perhaps a car, or a good job, providing for our children.

These are all good things and worthy ambitions. God is pleased when we have them.

But they are not as important as the kingdom of God.

They are like grade two pearls compared to a magnificent top-of the-range specimen.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net.

Perhaps in many ways we are like the fishermen who haul up the nets with all sorts of fish in them some good some bad.

We haul up into our lives things that are good and things that are bad.

Once on the shore the fishermen sort out the good and the bad fish - the bad are thrown out.

So the fishermen have to know the difference between the good and the bad.

I guess you could say that takes discernment.

Sadly sometimes we seem to lack discernment in deciding what we should keep and what we should throw away.

We take on board the good and the bad and carry both around with us.

I believe to be a part of God's kingdom we have to begin to get rid of those things that go against the life of the Kingdom. (The bad fish)

So what is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of Heaven?

Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a tiny seed. Something so small it is hardly noticeable. It would be easy to ignore it.

But if you sow the seed in your field - that is your heart and your life - then it will grow.

Like the tiny seed, the kingdom has huge potential but we have to give it the opportunity to grow.

I believe it's about our relationship with God and our understanding of him.

Jesus says the Kingdom of God is like treasure. When we find this special treasure we are willing to give everything we have for it. (don't we)

Jesus says the Kingdom of God is worth searching for and the more we look the more we will find.

Jesus says the Kingdom of God is like a net that will catch fish of all sorts but then the fish will be sorted and the bad thrown away.

So this week let us remind ourselves each day that we are in God's presence and that his Kingdom wants to grow in us.

It would be good to remember the words of Julian of Norwich.

God, you made me.

God, you love me.

God, you care for me.

Thank you, God.

Revd.Stephen