



“5 Parables of the Kingdom”

Sunday 26th July 2020 17th in Ordinary
Rev. Danny & Deacon Sally Wheadon.

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Welcome

The Lighting of a Candle & Call to Worship

As we enter God’s holy presence this morning, are you ready to hear again about God’s kingdom?

Come, open your hearts and minds to see the kingdom around us and within us.

Come, and worship
the living God.

Amen.

StF 555 Jesus, all for Jesus

1 Jesus, all for Jesus; all I am and have
and ever hope to be. *(Repeat)*

2 All of my ambitions, hopes and plans,
I surrender these into your hands.
(Repeat)

For it’s only in your will
that I am free. *(repeat)*

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Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving

God, your kingdom is like: a mustard seed - full of possibilities; yeast - it helps us to grow; treasure - worth searching for; a precious pearl - worth giving everything up for; a net - ready to gather us in. Help us to discover these secrets.
Amen.

Lord Jesus, sometimes we do not notice what you are doing. Sometimes we are too concerned about ourselves to notice other people in need... Sometimes we miss the opportunity to serve you and others... Forgive us, Lord, as we open our hearts to you. Help us to recognize your kingdom.
Amen.

Father God, thank you for the safety you provide. Gather our friends and family to you, that they would find their place in your kingdom.
Amen.

SoF (5) 2270

*Faith as small as a mustard seed will move mountains,
move mountains.*

*Faith as small as a mustard seed will move mountains
by the power of God. (Repeat)*



Believe what Jesus said was true,
believe he meant it just for you.
Wait and see what God will do,
as you pray, pray, as you pray.

Faith as small as a mustard...

Do da do da do da do do da,
do da do da mountains.
Do da do da do da do do da,
do da do da mustard.

Faith as small as a mustard...

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Today's Reading from the Gospel of
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-50
Read by Messy Church Team

Bible Reflection:

Our Bible reading today focusses on the Kingdom of Heaven, but what exactly does the phrase 'Kingdom of Heaven' mean? Often people think the Kingdom of Heaven is somewhere in the sky, a place where we go when we die. But actually, the Kingdom of Heaven is also here on earth. Indeed, we pray in the Lord's Prayer, 'your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' The Kingdom of Heaven is anywhere where God's will is accepted and carried out. Jesus came to herald in the Kingdom on earth, in Mark's gospel, he tells us as at the beginning of his ministry that the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God as it is also called, has come near. And of course, the Kingdom of Heaven lives inside us when we accept God into our lives and allow ourselves to be transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Thinking about the first parable specifically, Jesus uses illustrations that his original hearers could easily relate to, and the mustard seed was

what the people of Palestine used at that time if they wanted to indicate how small something was. They would say "it is as small as a mustard seed." And indeed, the mustard seed was about 1-2 millimetres in size. However, eventually, it would grow into a tree that was 2-3 metres tall and twice as wide. So from tiny beginnings, a large tree would grow, and when you think of this illustration concerning God's Kingdom, it makes sense. Jesus started his ministry with just twelve disciples, but today there are 2.3 billion followers of Jesus around the world.

The second parable is the parable of the yeast and no doubt Jesus would have seen his mother, Mary, baking bread in the family home. People, at that time, would easily be able to relate to this story. But this parable doesn't just speak about size, it also describes transformation. Unleavened bread can be flat, dry and unappetising but a small amount of yeast can transform the dough and produce bread which is soft and spongy and something we want to eat. The transforming of the dough represents the transformation that happens to us when we accept Jesus into our hearts, and when the Kingdom of Heaven lives within us.

The Kingdom of Heaven is, indeed, a precious thing as Jesus goes on to tell us in the next two parables. He speaks of a man who, on finding treasure buried in a field, sells everything he has in order to buy the field and own the treasure. Again, this was an image that Jesus' original audience could relate to. There were banks in Palestine at that time, but not for ordinary people and so they would

bury their valuables in the ground to keep them safe. But just as that man sold all he owned to buy the field and possess the treasure, likewise in the next parable, the pearl merchant, having found a pearl of great value, liquidised all his assets to purchase it. Pearls were greatly prized in the ancient world, more so than gold. People loved to look at them and contemplate their beauty. But notice how Jesus says he found a pearl of great value, he doesn't say this was the only pearl. There were other lesser pearls, but it was worth giving up everything for this particular one. And in our lives, there will be other things that demand our time and attention but to know God and live according to his will is the most precious thing. In these two parables, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of Heaven is so precious that it is worth giving up everything else in our lives to possess it. To live in a right relationship with God is the most precious thing there is. And we should never be afraid of giving up things for God, because when we do, just as Abraham was prepared to give up his son Isaac, in my experience, God gives back to us and blesses us in ways far beyond anything we can imagine.

So we've touched on four parables, but there is a fifth parable in today's reading, and that uses fishing as an illustration. One way of fishing in Jesus' time was to attach a drag-net to the boat. Once the boat started to move, the net was drawn into a cone shape, and everything in its wake was swept into it. No doubt, people would have seen the fisherman, upon their return to shore, sitting and sorting out the good fish from the bad and our

reading today ends with some quite scary imagery of the time of judgement at the end of the age. But I don't think we should dwell on that imagery too much. The point of the parable for us is that we are to welcome all into the Kingdom of Heaven without exception or discrimination. Jesus is telling us that it is not for us to judge who is and who is not worthy to live in the Kingdom. It's God's job to sort that out at the end of the age, and we are to leave it to him.

So to conclude, sometimes it can feel like the gospel is falling on stony ground and we can get disheartened. However, as we reflect on the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the handful of disciples who were told to go and tell, just like the mustard seed that grows into a tree, we can see that the Kingdom of Heaven is growing too. Just like the yeast that transforms the dough, it is spreading and transforming lives. In the next two parables, we learn that to have the Kingdom of Heaven reside within us is the most precious thing in the world. You cannot put a price on having a right relationship with God. Finally, we are not to judge others. Instead, our job, as followers of Jesus, is to witness to God's unconditional love by welcoming all into the Kingdom of Heaven without exception. We are to trust that God is working his purpose out and that he will bring his plan to completion when the time is right.



A time to be still:

MP 712 Turn your eyes upon

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth
will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.

Helen H Lemmel (1864-1961)
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A Time of Prayer

Lord, you took so much care to
describe your kingdom in ways
everyone could understand,
including us.

*Your kingdom come, O Lord.
Your will be done.*

We pray today that you will pass on
to us that gift of making ourselves
accessible.

Keep us from being a stumbling
block to those who would seek you;
from using language that puzzles;
from actions that confuse; from
anything that keeps us apart from
your people around us.

*Your kingdom come, O Lord.
Your will be done. Amen.*

May those we are mindful of today
find grace, healing, and blessing.
We bring all these prayers in the
name of Jesus who taught us when
we pray to say ...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

A personal prayer

Lord, I pause before you to contemplate
the things I see as valuable in my life.
Help me to hold them lightly
and to be ready to give them up
at the sound of your call.

Amen

A sending out prayer

Lord, it's not up to us to sort the bad
from the good, the wheat from the
weeds. Rather, send us out to love
everyone equally,
and to do everything we can to promote
your kingdom.

Amen.

StF 255 The Kingdom of God is

- 1 The kingdom of God
Is justice and joy,
For Jesus restores
What sin would destroy;
God's power and glory
In Jesus we know,
And here and hereafter
The kingdom shall grow.
- 2 The kingdom of God
Is mercy and grace,
The captives are freed,
The sinners find place,
The outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
And hope is awakened
Instead of despair.
- 3 God's kingdom is come,
The gift and the goal,
In Jesus begun,
In heaven made whole;
The heirs of the kingdom
Shall answer his call,
And all things cry glory
To God all in all!

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