

Sermon Pentecost 7, Year A

The Gospel

Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

Jesus put before the crowd another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. Let anyone with ears listen!”

Prayer: Lord, May my words today help your people and your Kingdom. *Amen*

Sermon:

Last week we read the parable about the Sower,
and the Seeds and the Soil they landed on.

The key variable was the Soil.

Today's Gospel we read a couple more of Jesus's parables.

Jesus told a lot of parables. ⁱ

Some folks think he used parables to explain his plan.

Maybe.

But if Jesus used parables to make things clear --

his plan was an Epic Fail.

I mean right after a parable his followers would say:

“What was that parable about?”

And we still ask that same question today!

Jesus told a ton of parables:

The Parable of the Sower, The Parable of the Weeds.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed, and

The Parable of the Yeast.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure, and the Pearl.

The Parable of the Net.

Those of us who have been going to church for awhile
Have heard most of the parables.

Some of us have heard them a million times.

It was nothing new to his Disciples.

But Jesus asked them, and he asks us:

“Do you understand?”ⁱⁱ

When I was a kid, if I walked by a construction site,

I would always look for a little peephole,

A little gap, in the plywood fence,

so I could see what was going on inside.

I knew I was only seeing a slice of the whole story.

Jesus’ parables are like a peephole.

They help us see a little bit of heaven, and

To see a little bit of God’s work here.

No matter how hard we try,

The most we can do is see a glimpse of the whole story.

But every little bit we see says that:

Life and Creation are a Work in Progress.

We are works in progress.

And so is the Kingdom of God.

*Growing like the mustard seed.*ⁱⁱⁱ

Last Sunday, we heard about Jesus sitting on a beach,

When a crowd came formed around him.

So he got into a boat, a few yards offshore,

And started to tell parables.

Jesus was an awesome impromptu speaker.

No teleprompter.

No consultants to keep him on message.

But why so many parables?

Couldn't he just give us a summary?

Bullet points? Cut and Dry?

I guess not.

The Kingdom of heaven is hard to explain.

Imagine that you are on a Starship.

There's a glitch and

Scotty accidentally beams you into the Amazon.

Where you meet a perfect stranger.

Of course, both of you speak English.^{iv}

Your new friend, ^v has lived his or her entire life

in the Amazon rainforest as a hunter-gatherer.

No house, just a grass hut.

No car, no dishes, no soap.

No clocks and no sense of time.

The sun rises and the sun sets.

Now, imagine that you have to explain what a Carl's Jr. is,
and why it is and how it works.

Imagine the questions:

What's a car? What's a motor? What's a drive-thru?

What's a "rush"?

What's bread? What's hamburger? What's a pickle?

What's a Jumbo Coke?

You have to explain everything in terms that
your new friend will understand.

That's what explaining the Kingdom of Heaven is like.

Jesus had to use familiar stuff.

We still do today:

Pearly gates. Streets of gold. Choirs of Angels.

But the Kingdom of Heaven isn't the Amazon, or some lost planet.

It's not far away and distant.

Like Jesus figured out after 40 days in the desert:

The Kingdom of Heaven has come near.

The Kingdom of Heaven is not far away. We don't need a starship.

The Kingdom of Heaven is not an alternate universe.

It is near. It is in our midst. *Here and now.*

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed,

It starts small, planted in our heart, when we are baptized.

And it grows and grows and grows,

Nourished by His Grace and His Love.

And it grows and it grows, and it grows

until it occupies all the world.

The Kingdom is in the little things.

The little kindnesses. The smile, even when we are mad.

The mask, even if it is irritating and a nuisance.

The decision to set aside Facebook and Twitter,

For just one day.

The decision to tolerate an obnoxious neighbor,

And to return a complaint with a smile.

The decision to disagree with someone in love,

Like a Good Samaritan.

“And they will know we are Christians by our love”.

Whoever “they” are, they *will* know.

And the Kingdom will grow.

A little seed. A little patience. A little love. A huge transformation.

“The kingdom of God is near.”

God lives in the ordinary.

We don’t have to be Mother Teresa or Billy Graham.

Or Pope Francis, or Bishop Michael Curry.

Because God works through me and you.

Everyday folks, living everyday lives.

Let’s go to work, then. Right here.

In Fort Hood. In Killeen. In St. Christopher’s.

-Amen

ⁱ Depending on how we define a “parable”, the New Testament has 55 or 60 “parables”. Some authors claim that the use of parables was common Jesus day. But I haven’t found any reliable sources for that. While they were common for Jesus, and he used common symbols and references, it is not so clear that the use of parables was common.

ⁱⁱ The Disciples said, “Yes”. But did they really Get It? See, Matthew 13:51

ⁱⁱⁱ Too often people read this Gospel and conclude that Jesus was trying to tell the crowd what heaven is like that heaven is a fixed place, or a fixed state of being. Oh! it if were just that easy.

^{iv} Well, one speaks American and the other speaks English.

^v Who is naturally either a beautiful young women, or a strong virile man, depending on your choice.