

Trinity 7, 26th July, 2020 Matthew 13.31-33,44-52.

Today's reading from St Matthew's Gospel tells us a series of parables in which Jesus starts each and every one with the words, '*The kingdom of heaven is like...*'. I'm sure we've all heard stories of farmers who have ploughed up hordes of gold coins and treasure in their fields. Like the man in Jesus' parable who finds treasure in a field and sells everything to buy the field and the treasure in it. A great risk, but one worth taking! It reminds me of stories such as King Solomon's Mines by Ryder Haggard and the Indiana Jones films. The heroes take great risks and weather many dangers to reach their treasure.

But we start with the mustard seed and the leaven, the yeast. Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven grows from small things into large things. I am used to growing mustard as a field crop to plough in as green manure. It enriches the soil and improves structure. Mustard however seems to have been allowed to grow into shrubs big enough for birds to perch on. It is a tiny seed that grows into something big, like yeast makes a small lump of dough into a large loaf of bread.

The first two parables seem little connected with the second two, about the people who find great treasure and give up all for it, but as I see them there is a link. They are about the Kingdom of Heaven, they are about how we find our faith and how it grows. Most things start off very small and grow. If we look into the history of many of the big businesses and organisations in the world they started as one person's idea and initiative and grew from that. The Christian Church grew from the 12 men from various walks of life that Jesus gathered around him. Those men we are told gave up all they had in order to do that. They gave up their lives as fishermen or whatever to follow Jesus in what must have been great uncertainty. They had stumbled across treasure and they wanted it.

Many people through the ages have given up all they had in order to follow Christ, to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Look at people like St Francis who gave up great riches to lead a life of poverty in God's service. Faith perhaps starts as a grain of uneasiness about the world, about the way we lead our lives, about what is right and what is wrong. Then we find the truth in Christ's Gospel and that grows in us and can eventually lead to great things. Some people may stumble upon it like the treasure, then they ensure that it is safe and invest in it all that they have. Others may be searching for the truth, because of a seed that was sown and has been growing and like the merchant they eventually find what they are looking for it and buy into it with all they have. I can think of a number of priests I have known through the years who came to the priesthood reluctantly, but ended up giving up good careers in order to follow God's calling. One priest I knew had been a bank manager and doing very well. He had a calling to the ministry and gave up a lot to follow it. He found treasure and invested all he had in it. When that calling comes it is difficult to ignore it. And we all have a calling to serve God in some way or another.

The last parable is about the last things. Ultimately, we will have to answer for how we have used the treasure God has given us. Have we done our part to grow the Kingdom of heaven? Have we shown our love for God and for our fellow beings as Jesus commands us to do? At this difficult time peoples' lives have changed; values as well. Are we ready to show them the treasure of the kingdom of heaven; to plant the seed on fertile ground? I pray that we all are.

Amen.