



LITURGY

Secrets of the kingdom

Abstract

“Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Matthew 13: 52 (NIV)

49A Pentecost 8A Liturgy

jim@dejongs.id.au

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Secrets of the kingdom

Sunday, July 26, 2020 | After Pentecost | Proper 12 | Year A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Genesis 29:15–28

Psalm Psalm 105:1–11, 45b or Psalm 128

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament 1 Kings 3:5–12

Psalm Psalm 119:129–136

New Testament Romans 8:26–39

Gospel Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52¹

Matthew 13.31-33,44-52

Jesus tells parables that seek to convey what the kingdom of heaven is ‘like’ or ‘similar to’. Some are about the way it grows and spreads, others stress its value compared to anything else in life.

This week’s resources explore: ways of understanding the kingdom of heaven.

	<p>Pre-Service</p> <p>03 The Treasure Artist: Wild Goose Collective & Macappella Album: I Will Not Sing Alone</p>
	<p>Greeting</p> <p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all</p>
	<p>We Gather</p> <p>As we enter God’s holy presence, 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.</p> <p><i>Let us pray</i> Lord God, as we gather in your house, we thank you for your presence, here with us. Thank you, Lord, that each one of us is unique,</p>

¹ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

yet we share a common bond in you.
 We come together as one body,
 but we all learn and experience things in different ways.
 We thank you for your amazing word
 that gives us so many pictures of your kingdom.
 Something for everyone,
 something to feed our hearts and minds.
 Be with us, Lord,
 and bless us richly as we call upon your name.
 Amen.

Hymn/song

10 This Kingdom (feat. Darlene Zsche

Welcome

Let us pray

O God, mere words cannot convey
 what a privilege it is to be heirs to your kingdom.
 As we explore your word today,
 help us to learn about new treasures as well as old.
 May we see the amazing things you can do in our lives.

We are part of your kingdom,
 and we come to you in awe and wonder.
 Amen.

Readings

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52 (NIV)

³¹ He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

³³ He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.
 “Yes,” they replied.

⁵² He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” ²

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hymn/song/video

tis #747 – “seek ye first”

We say Sorry

Lord God, sometimes I feel so set in my ways.

I’m not always ready to give something up

to gain the thing of value that you promise.

Forgive me, Lord, as I open my heart to you.

I want to keep my treasures locked up

in a storeroom, safe from prying eyes.

Forgive me, Lord, as I open my heart to you.

Sometimes I just expect things on a plate.

I’m not always ready to work for something

that you call me to do.

Forgive me, Lord, as I open my heart to you.

I do want to be the yeast in my world;

but I’m not always ready to be pummelled,

or to give up my easy life.

Forgive me, Lord, as I open my heart to you.

Sometimes I take my eyes off you and feel so lost.

Bring me back, please, Lord.

Forgive me, Lord, as I open my heart to you.

Amen.

Hymn/Song

The Summons (Will you come and follow me)

Response

Humans naturally think we are the centre of the universe

we think we are the norm

and everyone is different relative to us or our opinion.

We think we have the proper perspective on any issue

when in fact we may be way off.

Here is a story.

A CEO, driving with his wife needs to fill up with petrol

² [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

He leaves the highway at the next exit and found a rundown petrol station.

The garage owner offers to fill the tank,
And the CEO went for a little walk,
As he was returns to the car,
he notices that the attendant and his wife
are laughing and having a great conversation.

The conversation stops as soon as he arrives back at the car
so he pays the fellow.

As he drives off the fellow yells after them
"It was great talking to you."

The CEO asks his wife if she knew the man.
She said she did.

They had gone to high school together
and had dated steadily for about a year.

"Boy, were you lucky that I came along," bragged the CEO.

"If you had married him,
you'd be the wife of a petrol station attendant
instead of the wife of a CEO"

"My dear," replied his wife sarcastically,
"if I had married him, he'd be the chief executive officer
and you'd be the petrol station attendant."

Yes, not only do we often get it wrong
Jesus seems to understand this.
We especially get it wrong when it comes to spiritual matters.
So he clarifies the issue by telling five stories.

Today I will concentrate on 3 of them.

He said the kingdom of heaven is like a small mustard seed.
Why would Jesus choose such a small thing
to represent something as large as heaven?
Maybe because even though the Kingdom of Heaven is enormous
we are often blind to its presence as if it was small.

It is almost like he is making a joke
The KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like a mustard seed.
You all know what a ridiculous statement this is.
Mustard seeds are as small as a grain of sand.
You can literally hold thousands of them comfortably in the palm of your hand.
Yet it grows into a very large bush.
Large enough for birds to build their nest among its branches.

What is Jesus saying to us?
Is he saying that "God is at work,
even though our human eyes often fail to perceive what is happening."¹

As Christians we understand that undetectable things can have real influence,
but we live in a society that is in love with bigness.
We want to grow our churches into Big Churches.
We worry about the big social problems
such as world hunger and children in crises.

As a result,
we sometimes overlook the tiny seed problems

that are at the root of so many of these difficult situations,
the seed problems we could solve.

Do you remember the Shuttle program
and how it was grounded for several weeks
after the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded before the watching
world.

Today we are reminded about two tiny 5mm rubber o-rings
that were in the Solid Rocket Booster to stop gases from escaping
that failed to do what they were designed to do,
and, 73 seconds into her flight,
the shuttle exploded claiming the lives of all seven
crew members.

It's the little things.
Tiny viruses the size of a pin head,
heart valves no larger than a man's thumbnail,
single votes in an election,
an ill-chosen word from a loved one
it's little things that can have tremendous power.

Matthew 13 records a story Jesus told
about the smallest thing His audience could identify with--a mustard seed.
We should not underestimate the impact of little events.

Sometimes it takes just a little bit of patience to work with people.
Sometimes it takes just a little bit of love to redeem a situation.
Sometimes it takes just a little bit of grace to bring about healing.
Sometimes it takes just a little bit of understanding to save a marriage.

Yes, we often think we have the proper perspective on an issue
when in fact we can be way off the target.
And that, Jesus said, is what heaven is like.

Secondly he said that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field.
This is a hard one....

Jesus has said elsewhere that it is difficult
if not impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

But here he says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure
hidden in a field.

In other words the kingdom is like a lot of loot
stashed away somewhere.

So it could be suggested by some that the Kingdom of God
is like a man who accidentally discovers a stash of money in some poor
old saps field.

He takes his shovel and buries it again,
He then goes and sells everything he owns
so he can buy the land from the owner
who has no idea of the hidden wealth that actually belongs
to him.

Let me now ask you:

Is this the kind of Kingdom you want to belong to?
 Not me. In my book that doesn't sound like heavenly behaviour
 it sounds like crooked behaviour.

When Jesus says "the Kingdom of Heaven is LIKE"
 it is a figure of speech.

Jesus is not giving his approval or disapproval to this man's behaviour;
 he is simply using something that is common in our society
 to teach us about the uncommon, the Kingdom of Heaven.

And this heaven Jesus is talking about
 is not like a rascal who deceives a landowner out of his money.

Rather, Jesus is saying
 heaven is worth
 Whatever sacrifice we have to make,
 whatever loss we must endure,
 whatever trade we have to make
 whatever it takes us to bring heaven into our lives.

We must consider
 like Paul nothing surpasses the value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord
 and being part of his heaven.

That's what heaven is like.

Jesus said that heaven is like a merchant in search of pearls;
 on finding the one perfect pearl
 he sold all that he had to buy it.

This time it is not a hidden treasure,
 but a pearl on sale in the market place.
 and the merchant's response tells us the meaning of Jesus' parable.
 He sells everything he possesses in order to possess the pearl.

There is an ancient legend
 about the monk who found a precious stone,
 a very precious jewel.

A short time later, the monk met a traveller.
 The traveller said he was hungry
 and asked the monk if he would share some of his provisions.

When the monk opened his bag,
 the traveller saw the precious stone
 and, on an impulse,
 asked the monk if he could have it.

Amazingly,
 the monk gave the traveller the stone.

The traveller departed quickly
 overjoyed with his new possession.

However, a few days later,
 he came back, searching for the monk.

He returned the stone to the monk
 and made a request:

"Please give me something more valuable,
more precious than this stone.
Please give me that which enabled you to give me this precious stone!"

A commitment of the whole heart,
that's what heaven is like
That is what the Kingdom of Heaven requires of its followers.

I love this last parable
because Jesus does not say the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl of great
price.

He says the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant,
a merchant who finds a great deal on a flawless stone
and does everything in his power to close the sale.

That's commitment to a greater cause.
That's sacrifice and hard work.
That's what heaven is like.

Amen.

Hymn/song

Comfort Comfort all my people

Prayers for all people

*Invite people to think of signs around them
that show how God is alive in creation
– in nature, in people, in random acts of kindness, etc.*

Lord, as I go on my way this week,
whether in town or country, inside or outside,
among people or own my own,
alert me to signs of your kingdom.

Even if I can only see a small patch of sky out of a window,
remind me of the possibilities of your kingdom.

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.

Lord's Prayer

<p>Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN³</p>
<p>Hymn/song</p>
<p>We are sent out 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.</p> <p>May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace</p>
<p>Benediction</p>
<p>Thank you</p>

³ English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988

