

Service for Week 20th – 26th July 2026

By Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Gracious God, we mistakenly think sometimes of your kingdom in terms of the distant future- a time and place yet to come- but you make it plain in the teaching of Jesus that it is already present and you want each of us to commit to helping it grow here on earth. Teach us to work as far as we can to see your will be done and your kingdom come.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,.....

Amen

Bible Reading Matthew 13:31-33,44-51

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

He told them still another parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

From v 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. "Again, the kingdom

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

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 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. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Throughout the gospels Jesus teaches the disciples through relating stories called parables. These are stories with a message and the reason Jesus told parables was because he was able to use in these stories the everyday things of life at that time. By telling stories about farming, making bread or the shepherd looking after his sheep the people could easily relate to these things from life and thus get the message he was teaching more easily.

In our text we have five such parables which were teachings about 'the Kingdom of heaven' or in other gospels

referred to as the 'Kingdom of God'. Today we are not so familiar with the concept of kingdoms. In biblical times land areas and countries - kingdoms were ruled by all powerful kings and the people living in that kingdom had to live by the king's principals, laws and will.

The Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God is like that – it is when people are living according to the principals that God wants us to live by –which includes living in peace, in harmony with our neighbors, not committing crime and treating others as we want to be treated. These were first set out in the Old Testament in the ten commandments and are as Jesus himself taught throughout his life here, as recorded in the gospels and particularly recorded in his 'sermon on the mount'. It is a way of life that Jesus is describing.

Now you will say that way of life is not the world we live in. We have wars, and high levels of crime. People discriminate against others that do not have the same background, nationality, religion or skin colour from them which stops them from living in peace. That is true but the message that Jesus had for his followers, and for us, is that we should do all we can to create a good way of life living by God's principals, for ourselves, for our families and those around us. If we manage to do that then we are living

in 'the kingdom of heaven' or as God wants us to live, until that time when our spirit will return to God in the place we call heaven.

Yes, wars and crime and bad things may happen around us but if we look for the good, if we look to change the world around us then, together, we can create a heaven on earth. When we seek out the good in life and recognize that God is at work in those things is when we see the 'kingdom of heaven'. When we do that, it will become the most important thing in our lives and something to celebrate just as the man who found treasure in a field and the merchant upon finding a pearl of great value.

Our text finishes with the fishermen who caught all kinds of fish in their net. Those that were rejected as bad ended as bad people will end - in the biblical words (metaphorical idiom) in 'a fiery furnace and a weeping and gnashing of teeth.' This is a dramatic way of saying that for those who choose not to live the way of life that God wants for us and do not repent, their spirit will die and not live on with God.

Look for the good and you will find the 'kingdom of heaven'. **Amen**

Closing prayer -Loving God, help me to see around me the seeds of your kingdom, and to nurture them lovingly.

Amen

Prayers inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett