

Wednesday 22.07.2020

Today's Gospel reading continues the series of parables in Matthew's Gospel.

Each parable is intending to build another layer upon layer of Jesus' teaching and message - to reveal something of the Kingdom of Heaven.

A key point in today's reading says, the kingdom is a treasure – and is ours for the taking. A treasure like the finest, largest, purest pearl, that the most skilled, master jeweller could ever imagine. It's yours and mine for the taking – all you have to do is sell everything that you have.

Jesus' parables stir our minds to look more deeply into his teachings and to tease our minds into seeing something new and surprising.

The first parable contains two smaller stories about the treasure of kingdom of heaven.

In the first story, someone comes across a treasure, merely by chance. With much surprise and delight, recognising its value, they sell all that they have to purchase this newly found treasure.

In the second, someone goes out in search of the treasure, a fine pearl that is known to exist.

Upon finding it - something far better than anything they could have imagined or hoped for, they sell all that they have to purchase this found treasure.

Each of these people travel a different path, yet in the end each have the same result.

These parables often raise a question "Are you willing to sell everything for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven?"

However, if we look closely at the details, and scratch a little deeper – the people in these stories do not wrestle with the issue of whether the deal is worth making or ask themselves the question "are they willing?"

Rather, they just seem to understand the deal they are making is a good one and go through with it with joy.

The writer of Matthew's Gospel then adds another layer - in Jesus' parable of the fishing nets.

Jesus' parable once again uses earthy imagery very familiar to people at that time and here he also makes reference to the end time.

The nets are cast, and whatever is caught in the nets is drag into shore.

The fisherman then sort out what is good, and what is bad.

Life presents us with all kinds of things, good and bad.

We're all human, aren't we, and some of our responses to whatever life throws our way can be helpful and life giving, not just for us but also for others  
And other responses can be ..... less than helpful for our souls.  
We have a choice in how we respond with ways of forgiveness, love, grace, giving, compassion, *among many others*.  
*And we can spend our whole life working on these.*

Even though we are just human beings, we also believe in transformation as we hear the treasures of our faith.

From the old ... can come the new.

Which one is more valuable?

Just as Jesus asked the question then: 'Have you understood all this?'

That same question can be asked of us today!

Jesus stirs our minds to look more deeply.

What we knew in the old and familiar will be stirred to look to the new, to things that we never knew before, with new insight and understanding.

As we hear the Gospel reading today and if we are to understand even a little of the message of the parables,

We can ask ourselves two questions

First, Do we realise just how wonderful and great is the Kingdom of which Jesus is speaking.

And .... Do you then give up whatever you may have for it and do so joyfully.

In conclusion:

Jesus, taught through the use of parables, such as we've heard today and his reputation preceded him as a great teacher in Galilee with great powers, as he went throughout the region, and crowds gathered to hear him.

And Matthew's Gospel speaks of Jesus' rejection at the end of long series of parables on the kingdom.

With comments like: Surely his family and friends would have welcomed him with open arms. He's the local boy from down the street – surely he can't be anyone special.

The writer of Matthew's Gospel it seems wants to make the point that Jesus wasn't an exception - he was one of them, and yet there is a tension in that he is one possessing great wisdom and power, there was more to this man of Galilee than first thought.

Ultimately it wasn't just those of his home town who rejected him, many more did also.

The treasures in Christ himself were hidden from many but not all, and the greatest of treasures that was hidden .... was in a tomb.

Christ and his resurrection shows that whilst the Kingdom of Heaven may not seem impressive to this earthly world we are assured of its power and of its value.

We have faith in God and the new things that God was doing in and through Christ.

Again and again we can take time to remember also, God has faith in us!

God has faith in us – that we will hear and understand the message of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven.

And as God's people have been entrusted with that which is most precious in the world.

*Blessings Lyn*