

Sunday 30th July 2023

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Reading Matthew 13:31-33, 44-46, 51-52

Reflection

In our reading today we have a collection of parables about the kingdom of heaven. Matthew uses the term Kingdom of heaven where Luke and Mark refer to the kingdom of God and it can confuse the meaning as the term heaven is often synonymous with life after death. However Jesus was at pains to point out that the Kingdom of God was already although we only catch fleeting glimpses. So, these parables are about following the way of Jesus and making a difference now. One of my favourite children's stories which illustrates this point is Heaven by Nicholas Allan

Story – [Heaven](#)

This story challenges our perspective of heaven but also underlines that we can do something to make heaven on earth – or God's Kingdom come on earth as in heaven. The first two parables invite us to consider how from the smallest of beginnings something great and glorious can happen. They are about the abundance of God's love. First Jesus uses a mustard seed, one of the smaller seeds which we plant and speaks of it becoming a tree in which birds can roost. Some commentators suggest that the seed represents the time and experience of Jesus and those early disciples whilst the tree is the expectations of the future, the imagining of the Kingdom come when God's love as spread and all find a home within it. The second parable speaks of something even smaller, the microbial yeast cell which when nurtured has the power to transform a bushel of wheat into the bread of life. Jesus is saying don't be disheartened, do not feel inadequate for within you is the power of God to make a difference, it is how we use that power that creates heaven, or hell. Choose wisely but believe in yourself.

Now we move to two parables about commitment. The man who discovers treasure in a field and the dealer who discovers the most beautiful pearl in the world. These are about discerning what is the most important thing for contentment. It is interesting to note that in both cases the men sold all they had to own the treasure. We are not told what the treasure in the field was but a single pearl whilst wonderful is not going to feed, clothe and put a roof over your head without selling it, and neither will the treasure. Sometimes we long for things we think will make us happy, maybe sacrificing things to gain them, only to find we are still not content. So, how do we interpret these parables. Perhaps with the first one we might reflect not just on the man we are told about but the man from whom the field was bought, what did he feel when the new owner revealed the treasure? Maybe he kicked himself for not finding the treasure and perhaps that is what Jesus is hinting at, don't overlook what you already have, how can you use your treasure to make a difference?

The dealer in pearls gave everything to own what he believed to be the finest pearl in the world, and what did he have, a pearl. Maybe the message here is that the Kingdom is not something to possess and cherish for itself but rather something to live. The Kingdom is a way of life and it takes discernment.

Life is a journey on which we gather knowledge and wisdom, recognise abundance and learn discernment. When my husband and I got married we had bought a house, a new build in a small village in Lancashire. We had very little money and by the time we moved in my husband had been made redundant and so we had even less with which to furnish our house. We had a bed, we had a kitchen table and two benches, a sun lounger and a chair with very short legs. Mum and Dad brought a van down with a single tub washing machine with wringer from a Scout jumble sale, an electric cooker that predated anything I had seen in my childhood home, enough carpet times to go once around the bed and a home built unit that was too tall for our rooms so we removed the doors and used them to make a corner wardrobe and turned the unit on its side to use as a shelf unit in the lounge. We invested in a three piece suite that had a sofa bed for visitors. We bought very little new but gradually we furnished our home. We look back on the stories and know that we grew through the experience both as individuals and in our relationship.

Sometimes it is the obstacles we come across on our journey that help us to grow. In recent decades it has

often seemed that most young people expected to move into a ready furnished house with all the necessities and what would have been luxuries for us. I think it is changing slowly as we learn to value old items and reuse and repurpose. However, I have often wondered if this ready built life really served couples in growing together.

The last two verses in our reading are reminder that we should not discard everything from the past but learn to discern what is important to keep. When we value the things collected on the journey we are reminded of the abundance of God's love; when we use wisdom to select what is important to pass on we are reminded of the treasure we already have, and that is way of Jesus.

When we are celebrate new beginnings we have to make decisions about letting some things go. There is a vulnerability in letting go, but there is also comfort in recognising the treasure of old. We are not starting from scratch with bare boards and a few random possessions. We are journeying forward, through discernment to follow the path to the kingdom, taking with us some of the treasure of old but not so many that we are weighed down and tired before we start or have no room for the new treasures waiting to be discovered. We are learning to live kingdom, together. We are mustard seeds and yeast, we seek to recognise the treasure we already have but know the kingdom is not about possessing but sharing what we have with others, and we are ready for the journey, wherever it takes us for God is in the journey.