

The Treasure and The Tree



God's Word for This Week

24th July 2020

The Collect

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
Graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The First Reading

Genesis 29: 15-28

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, 'Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?'¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah's eyes were lovely,* and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, 'I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.' ¹⁹ Laban said, 'It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.' ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.' ²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. ²³ But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. ²⁴ (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) ²⁵ When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?' ²⁶ Laban said, 'This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me for another seven years.' ²⁸ Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

The Second Reading

Romans 8: 26-39

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes* with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God,* who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit* intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* ²⁸We know that all things work together for good* for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.* ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.* ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Gospel Reading

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

³¹He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³²it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

³³He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with* three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

⁴⁴'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.'⁵²And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

Psalm 105

O give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples.
Sing to him, sing praises,
and tell of all his marvellous works.
Rejoice in the praise of his holy name;
let the hearts of them rejoice who seek the Lord.
Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his face continually.
Remember the marvels he has done,
his wonders and the judgements of his mouth,
O seed of Abraham his servant,
O children of Jacob his chosen.

He is the Lord our God;
his judgements are in all the earth.
He has always been mindful of his covenant,
the promise that he made for a thousand generations.
The covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath that he swore to Isaac,
Which he established as a statute for Jacob,
an everlasting covenant for Israel,
Saying, 'To you will I give the land of Canaan
to be the portion of your inheritance.'
That they might keep his statutes
and faithfully observe his laws.
Alleluia.

Pointers for Prayer

This is the third week of Kingdom Parables which involve nature and all that is familiar to the people Jesus wishes to reach. The first week spoke about different terrain we can encounter during our spiritual journey towards Christ and the Kingdom of God, while the second week looked at life among weeds and the challenges presented to us as followers of Christ in today's world. This week we learn about the Treasure and the Tree. This week Jesus presents five short and beautifully illustrated parables regarding the Kingdom of Heaven as *a mustard seed, yeast, a buried treasure, a pearl of great worth and net filled with fish*. There are two underlying themes to these parables;

HOPE AND GROWTH

The tiny seed becomes a large plant and the yeast expands the bread. In the example of the seed, Christ offers us hope that, a modicum of faith nurtured produces not only a healthy plant or tree but one that provides a safe harbour for other living things. These words speak of potential which may not initially be apparent.

Some may judge themselves unworthy to come to Christ and carry with them regrets or hurt from the past which inhibits them from coming in the first place. The type of love Jesus operates is beyond the understanding of this world. Suffice to say that it is far broader than any of our preconceptions of ourselves. Again and again within scripture and within our daily lives, Jesus offers us a new beginning and great hope. He began with those lower on the ladder of society; he placed the last first and this week he tells us that the smallest of seeds holds remarkable potential for the type of change that can change the lives of others too.

Breathe afresh today. In God's book there is always time for a new beginning. What are the seeds within yourself that need nurturing by God? In your lifetime, in which situations has a seed within you become a broader plant and assisted in the lives of others? Thank God for these times.

TREASURE In other scriptures, Jesus speaks of intentions; *"you may have heard it said you shall not kill, but I tell you, anyone who is angry with his brother is guilty of judgement."* Matt 5:21 *"...you shall not commit adultery but anyone who looks at a woman with lust commits adultery with her in his heart."* Matt. 5: 27



These are difficult scriptures as Jesus doesn't glance at the law but digs deeper into the heart and *intentions* of an individual. This week we hear more about intentions. It is the person who discovers the treasure in the field (the Kingdom of God in this world) who sells everything he has so that he might own the field and the treasure with it! The same with the pearl of great worth which sits in the hand of the one who has sold all his possessions to buy it.



If you have discovered the Kingdom of God or have begun to recognise what this mysterious Kingdom truly is in your life and in this world, you will, no doubt, begin to seek it more and more. Your intentions will be towards obtaining a clearer knowledge of it in this lifetime and living through and in the Kingdom here on earth. Furthermore, you may wish to sell off everything else that took first place in your life up to

now. Ridding yourself of all your possessions doesn't necessarily mean ending up in a hut on a hilltop, rather it means prioritising your intentions towards the true prize and the thing of unequalled value

What does the Kingdom look like to you in your life and is your journey towards a clearer understanding of it moving forward? Can you see how living through Christ is living in the Kingdom here on earth and recognise the changes this can make to your life and the lives around you? What are the things you need to 'sell-off' within yourself or your life in order to draw closer to the treasure you have now discovered?

