

Seventh Sunday after Trinity 2020

Words of welcome

Today our gospel reminds us that the treasures of God's kingdom are waiting to be found by those who can recognize their worth. We pray today for the grace to glimpse the kingdom in all we see and all we do.

Opening words

Jesus says "Where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also"

Help us to glimpse your glory in all we meet

Jesus says "Ask and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you."

Help us to know your glory in our seeking and in our finding.

St. Paul says "We have this treasure in clay jars"

Help us to share your glory in word and deed.

Today's Collect

Generous God, you give us gifts and make them grow:
though our faith is small as mustard seed,
make it grow to your glory and the flourishing of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A reading from Matthew's gospel

³¹Jesus put before the crowd 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.'

⁴⁴The 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.

⁴⁵Again, 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.

⁴⁷Again, 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.'

3.

For the word of God in scripture

For the word of God among us

For the word of God within us

Thanks be to God

Reflection

Since the dawn of time people have been looking for treasure. They have searched in fields, in the mountains, under the sea longing to find gold or diamonds or pearls, thinking that such a discovery would surely bring joy. Today, although metal detecting is a popular pastime for some, which occasionally brings with it huge rewards, people look for treasure in other ways - the lottery, the casino, the stock market. If only they could hit the jackpot, all their troubles would be over – if only it were that simple!

But the strange thing is the things we sometimes refer to as treasure are things that money cannot buy. We talk about some children as 'little treasures' we talk about treasured memories, and treasured possessions which often don't have a high monetary value. Maybe this time of lockdown has been a time for you to ponder the treasures in your own life – what are the things that are valuable to you. Seeing family or friends, coming to church, going to a café for a coffee, or the pub for a pint – all those things we may have taken for granted.

In a way we are all treasure hunters. All of us are looking for something that will make us happy or content. And there's nothing wrong with that.

In this morning's gospel Jesus speaks about the lengths some people will go to in order to possess what they perceive as valuable. People for whom nothing is **more important - so** important that they are willing to sell everything they have in order to achieve it.

Christ loved those who were searching - and encouraged them in that. He had sympathy for those who were looking - even if they were looking in the wrong places and for the wrong things. He understood their hunger and thirst, and time and again tried to help them and point them in the right direction.

Jesus uses many examples in today's gospel of people who make wonderful discoveries. And all of the people make those discoveries as they are going about their ordinary, everyday business.

The farmer sowing mustard seed; the person working in a field when he stumbles across treasure by accident; the merchant doing his normal work and discovering the pearl of great price; the fisherman catching fish. Jesus compares all those discoveries to the Kingdom of God - and is trying to tell us that it's by going about our ordinary everyday business that we can find God.

We stumble across God, unexpectedly, when we don't even realise we are looking.

There's a book by Philip Yancy called "Finding God in unexpected places". And on the back of the book he has written these words "As a Christian journalist, I have learned to look for traces of God. I have found those traces in unexpected places - in atheistic nations, slums and health clubs In prisons, orphanages and even in the plays of Shakespeare. I have found malaise in the midst of plenty and stirring hope in circumstances that should have produced despair. I have found evil in the most unexpected places, and also God."

The people in today's parable didn't find this great treasure we call God, in the exotic, nor by following extreme pious practices, or by making great journeys. Like Philip Yancy, they made their discovery simply by doing their jobs, by going about the tasks they did every day - through what was normal for them.

How often do we miss the signs of the Kingdom because we look for God in the spectacular, in the extraordinary - when all the time God is in the ordinariness of everyday life - hidden in the routine of our daily tasks.

There are times in most of our lives when we become envious of other people's talents, or possessions, or lifestyle.

But what Jesus is trying to tell us in this morning's parables is that the kingdom of heaven is not going to be found in someone else's field or by wishing we were someone else. The kingdom of heaven is right here, under our noses - we have to look in our own fields, our own lives, our own relationships - for it's through these that God speaks to us, reveals himself to us.

It's in our own lives that the treasure is hidden. The Kingdom of heaven is within you and me - and to start by looking elsewhere is to end up chasing rainbows and looking for that elusive pot of gold.

Discovering the kingdom is a life-time's journey. It's about letting God take us exactly as we are - the good bits and the bad - our vices as well as our virtues. And like the fishing net in today's gospel, which catches the good fish and the bad, so God sorts through it all -

salvaging, healing, using what he can and saving us from those parts of ourselves which are destructive and negative.

Right where we are today God is with us, valuing us, yet assuring us there is yet more treasure to find. May God bless each of us as we dig deeper and discover more of his love. Amen.

Prayers

May the Spirit pray through us as we try to put into words the longing of our hearts for the Church and for the world.

Father we thank you for all who have helped us to pray and to grasp something of your great love and power. We ask your blessing and empowering for all who teach and minister in your name; we ask for our Sunday worship to be an overflowing or our daily walk with you, an expression of our deepening love. We pray for our Bishops David, Mark and Mark, Archdeacon Karen and Rachel our area dean. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father we thank you the beauty and diversity of the created world we inhabit. We ask for the wisdom to tend it carefully, respecting the natural laws and sharing the resources, listening to the weak as well as the strident, the poor as well as the affluent and powerful. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father we thank you for the joy of friendship, for all with whom we share our daily life and those we love but seldom meet. Help us to care for one another and give us hearts that are skilled in listening. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father we thank you for all who work in the NHS, the caring professions and the essential services. We pray for staff and residents in our local nursing homes - Ashley House, Holmfield, Brocklehurst and Monet Lodge. We remember scientists working on development of vaccines for COVID-19. We pray for all who are ill at home or in hospital. Give them comfort and reassurance, healing, wholeness and peace. Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father we call to mind all those we have known and loved
who lived among us and now have died.
We pray for all who made that journey unnoticed and alone.
We ask that they may all know your mercy
and the everlasting peace and joy of heaven.
Lord hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father we thank you for your wisdom and truth,
your understanding and generosity.
We acknowledge our total dependence on you,
and praise you for providing us with all we need.

Merciful Father
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

We join all our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus gave us.
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All shall be well

For the greening of trees and the gentling of friends.
We thank you, God

For the brightness of field and the warmth of the sun
We thank you, God

For work to be done and laughter to share
We thank you, God
We thank you, and know that through struggle and pain
in the slippery path of new birth hope will be born
And all shall be well.

A prayer from the BCP

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

May God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit
bless, preserve us and keep us this day and for evermore.
Amen.

Let us go in the peace of Christ
Thanks be to God.

Pattern of our days c 1996