

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 12

July 26, 2020

Year A RCL

1 Kings 3:5-12; Psalm 119:129-136; Matthew 13:31-33,44-52

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like...”

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The Kingdom of God has a value that surpasses all that we can imagine or understand, since it is the presence of God himself as the one who rules and reigns through Jesus upon the whole universe in His own terms. There are many metaphors, symbols, and images that Jesus and the Gospel uses to illustrate the nature of the kingdom today; five times we heard “the kingdom of heaven is like”.

A mustard seed, yeast, a treasure, a fine pearl, and a net are all illustrations in this parable that points out specific characteristics of the Kingdom of Heaven. A mustard seed and yeast are descriptions used to show us how the kingdom of God brings a reality that needs to develop and grow. The mustard seed is the smallest of the seeds and has the potential to grow and become the biggest of trees. Jesus uses the mustard seed image also to talk about the size of the faith, in Matthew 17:20, “For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard

seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

To receive the Kingdom of Heaven even with such little faith as the mustard seed which has the power to move and transform realities that seems irremovable and all because the one who does the work is God the Almighty. It is not on the side of human faith or force that move the mountains, but instead it is the size of the mustard seed of authentic faith placed in the one who has control and dominion over all creation, God the Most Powerful.

Jesus knew how difficult it was for his disciples to convert and persevere as believers. Doubt has always been present throughout humanity and it makes the fragile faith become even smaller than the mustard seed. That is why Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven with this seed, because if a person is capable of possessing this minimum size of faith, it can grow and progress until it reaches a faith that moves mountains or becomes the tree that allows the birds of the air to make nests in its branches.

In similar way, we hear that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure and a fine pearl. When people find the treasure or the fine pearl, they hide it and sell all they possess to acquire the field and the fine pearl, because it produces great joy. These two images are reminders that the truths of the kingdom are

revealed to those who seek and search for them. God always lives among us, but each person has the responsibility to find how God is present in each context.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Mt 7:7) This teaching of Jesus helps our understanding of the two parables of the treasure and the fine pearl. They show how the nature of God is disclosed and hidden and requires human interest and searching constantly. Once a person encounters God it is impossible to remain the same. All the encounters Jesus has with people in the Gospels were moments of transformation for the people.

In finding God, people experience a joy and wholeness that no other people, possessions, or titles can offer. It is for this reason that a true disciple wants to sell all he owns to buy the field or the fine pearl. The only investment that guarantees growth and access for eternal life is to use our own possessions and assets in the unchangeable nature of God that never fails.

A net that catches fish of every kind is an image that shows the unlimited and welcoming nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, and at the same time anticipates what will happen on the day of judgment. This image continues in line with what we had heard last week with the parable of the wheat and the weed, and reminds us that all kinds of people constantly live together side by side. Only

God has the authority to exercise judgment, but we have the task to discern and understand that the net catches all kinds of fish, good and bad.

The Kingdom of Heaven then is among us all the time, it grows and develops throughout our actions and relationships. We like King Solomon need to be always ready to discover how God is appearing to us and especially when God asks us- What do you want? We need to answer not according to our own desires, but instead with the values of God who cares and loves all even to the point of allowing all kind of fish to be in the net until the end of the ages. While this day arrives as believers, it is important to cultivate our mustard seed of faith knowing that the flourishing and transforming process is a divine initiative that requires our full participation. Amen.