

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Please read through these passages slowly and reflectively before reading my sermon.

1Kings 3:5-12 Ps 105:1-11 Romans 8:26-end

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

In writing and reading, speaking and listening, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

What riches today: several parables tumbling one after the other. Which precious box will open to you in a new way today? Where will you find a new gift which was made for you long before you were born?

Today I am going to begin with an interpretation of one of these parable that is not my own – it was given to a group of us who were preparing to begin a thirty day retreat guided by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola. We had some preparatory days to explore different ways of praying, and especially getting familiar with asking God to use our imaginations and our senses to show us what God wanted to give us when we prayed. I am going to offer it in the style of a guided prayer as it was given to me.

Take a moment to be still. Offer God your imagination as the way of guiding you in this time of reflection.

Imagine that you are in a quiet place, it's a low lit place, you are quite still and peaceful but you are on your own and it is not familiar.

In the distance you can hear footsteps. Someone is walking swiftly in this direction with a purpose. As the footsteps come closer you realise they are above you. Whilst up until now you have been quite content on your own, you begin to feel a curiosity and a desire to meet whoever it is coming in this direction. And, happily the footsteps stop right above you and you begin to hear the noise of whatever is between you and them being investigated. It

sounds as if they are coming to find you. And you know you want to be found.

The investigations sounds stop, and again you hear footsteps, this time receding, going back the way they came. Your heart is no longer peaceful, but before you are totally overwhelmed with disappointment, the footsteps are coming back – this time at a run. They stop right above you, and now the sounds are not of investigation, they are speedy removal of all that is between you and the one who is coming to find you.

Everything opens.

Now you can step up and meet him. Jesus takes you by the hand, you hear him call you by name: "you are my beloved, you are precious in my sight" he tells you in words especially for you, that you can really understand, really take, really believe.....what do you hear him say?

So,

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid: then in his joy he sells all that he has and buys that field"

What if we are the treasure and the someone who wants us so much he will give everything for us is Jesus?

The parable opened to me in a totally new way.

What if the Kingdom of heaven is the place where everyone knows they are totally precious to God, they are loved just as they are, and loved so much that God will give everything for them?

What if I allow the tiny seed of God's total love for me grow in my heart?

What if I allow the yeast of knowing everyone around me is totally loved by God leaven my heart?

Can we imagine what a world where everyone knows they are fully loved by God and everyone values everyone else because they recognise them as brothers and sisters equally precious to God might look like:

A tree with room for every bird to find a place to nest in communal companionship – a common home.

A table where all share an infinitely leavened loaf and are fully fed- a common feast

It is that simple.

That joyful.

And that is who we are called to be and what we are called to share.

Simple and joyful

But simple and joyful are not always easy!

I have vivid memories from my previous parish of telling the children's Godly play group the parable of the pearl merchant who sells all he has to buy the pearl of great price. The actions of the story telling are that you move the figure of the pearl merchant backwards and forwards between his house and the pearl trader's bring more and more of his belongings until he has nothing left and the trader agrees to sell the pearl.

The children were mystified: "why would he do that? That's mad? I wouldn't do it....."

What might be so valuable that you were prepared to do that?

We went on to explore what we really value, what is most important to us.

To be able to see what is of most value, and make it the centre of our lives is a gift of God's grace.

To be able to see and keep sight of the knowledge we are each loved by God just as we are is a pearl of great price.

It is the gift of being able to say with Paul that nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is the seed in our heart that expands like the tree that homes all birds, the seed of knowing that we are so totally precious to God, that God's love overflows in our hearts to those around us.

It is the leaven in our heart that helps us forgive and share and let others know that they too are infinitely precious in God's sight.

So this week may we open our hearts to all the ways Jesus lifts from us all that obstructs us from him, all the ways he speaks God's love to us, each one of us, in his own particular way. May we open our hearts to feel that love as our own pearl of great price.

As we have contact with others, or consider the world around us, may we open our hearts to them, helping them through our words and actions to know that they too are treasures of God for which Jesus gave everything.

With open hearts may we receive the simple joy of the Kingdom where everyone knows they are precious in God's sight. Amen