

Shellrock Benefice Service Sheet for Trinity 7, July 26th 2020

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

Readings

Genesis 29, 15-28; Psalm 105, 1-11; Romans 8, 26-end; Matt 13, 31-33 and 44-52

A Reflection

I wonder if the crowds listening to Jesus were disappointed --- and maybe some of the disciples were too. Jesus tells yet another parable about seeds and plants, followed by stories of baking bread, ploughing a field and fishing. So apart from a story about a wealthy merchant, all the rest are very ordinary. No kings or princes or military generals or revolutionary leaders. The stories that Jesus tells about the kingdom and of that heaven are down to earth, literally. They are stories about ordinary people doing ordinary everyday things. This is hardly an exalted vision of God's realm.

And that in a sense is the central message, it seems to me. As Christians, a core belief is in the incarnation; the meeting of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus. In his parables, Jesus puts that incarnational focus, not on himself, but on the world around him. The kingdom of God is like ----- well the most ordinary every day things in life. Like Jesus himself, this everyday world embodies the sacred meaning of divine and human, if only we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear.

According to Matthew, the first thing that Jesus does when he comes out of the wilderness is to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven has come near (3:2). He demonstrates that nearness every time he heals someone, reaches out to outcasts, respects women or cares for and calls attention to the poor. He also demonstrates that nearness through these kingdom parables. For Jesus, God's realm is not some far away possible kingdom, but is as close as the next loaf of bread. That nearness is the basis of his call to belief. Of these five parables in the gospel passage for this morning, only the last includes judgement. The rest envisage God in every nook and cranny of daily life, from kneading the dough, to ploughing the fields. Jesus transforms human life, not by scaring people, but by helping them to see the heaven which is always close at hand.

Suggestions for prayer with a response: "*O Lord, Hear our Prayer*"

For all people known to us who are ill at this time, especially those in the benefice

For guidance from the Holy Spirit as we move ahead and plan for the future

For eyes and ears to recognise that the Kingdom of which Jesus speaks is in the ordinary things around us

For thanks for the very many wonderful gifts which are part of creation.

The Lord's Prayer

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

Blessing

The love of God sustain us, the joy of Jesus fill us, and the power of Jesus strengthen us. And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

