

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
July 26, 2026 • 10:30am
Trinity Episcopal Church • New Orleans, LA

The Rev. John M. Pitzer

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. You may be seated.

So if it makes you feel any better, earlier in the week, Father Lex asked me about preaching.

He said, what are you preaching on? I said, well, I'm not touching the Old Testament reading. We were even kind of looking at each other up here. It's like, hmm, that's a very interesting reading.

So sorry, you're not going to get anything about that. So last night, I happened to be on the North Shore having dinner with friends of mine from Hammond, Louisiana. You might remember when I was on the Roman side of the river, Hammond was my very first assignment as a priest.

The Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Hammond, Louisiana has been a Dominican church for about 130 years. So I have a lot of friends in that area and was having dinner with very dear friends. And my friend Debbie has been a teacher all of her life.

And she just retired last year. But she's a teacher at heart. She's constantly teaching.

And I don't mean that in a negative way. She's really an incredible person. And when I worked at Holy Ghost as a priest and was involved a little bit in the school, she was everybody's favorite teacher.

And I'm not just saying that because I know her. She was amazing. And if I heard her say 10 times that I heard her say it 100, that life is a classroom.

She is a believer. And we really, most of us get that. Life is a classroom.

We are constantly learning things. When we are younger and we start school, we have a textbook to help us learn. And then a little bit later in life, you may not have a textbook, but if you are learning something at a new job, it might be a manual, but something you have to read and see, learn something about what you're going to be doing.

I've often told stories about when I taught second grade and they had trouble maybe wrapping their minds around a math problem or understanding a science teaching. And then all of a sudden when they get it, it's like a light bulb goes off in their head. It's like, oh, they understand it.

And isn't it that way really for all of us? Whatever age we are, whatever we're learning, we don't always get it at first, but then all of a sudden it makes total sense. So 2,000 years ago, there were no textbooks. There were no manuals for the followers of Jesus.

There was no Bible, and hard to believe, but there was no book of common prayer. Even though we like to think sometimes that it goes back that far. No Bible, no book of common prayer.

It was experience of life, which is often how we learn today after we're done with textbooks and manuals, we learn from life, and hopefully we learn the right things. If we make a mistake, we learn not to do it again, right? So how Jesus got his ideas across, he told parables. Parables are short stories that don't always say exactly what he's trying to say.

He's referring to something in life, and he's hoping that his followers will figure it out. He sometimes says, you still don't get it? Remember, he even says that to the Pharisees at one point when he talks about a parable or explains something, and he goes, wait a minute, you're a religious leader in the community, and you still don't understand what I'm talking about. So I started thinking this week, do we

really understand what the kingdom is all about? I mean, all of a sudden, Jesus in today's Gospel is going to talk about the kingdom, and instead of telling one parable, he tells five.

Maybe knowing that one wasn't enough. Maybe thinking, no, they need a second one. Well, maybe they're going to need a third one.

Well, you know, they might need a fourth one. You know, I'll bet they're going to need at least five. And will that even work? Will five be enough? So just as a little review, I don't want you to open your program.

I want you to listen. It's a quick little review of what he said to his followers, and he's talking about the kingdom of heaven is like, trying to make a point. So he says the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed.

Goes on to explain that a little bit. Then he says the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour. Okay.

He goes on a little bit further. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. Takes it a step further.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he finds one pearl of great value, he goes and sells everything he has so he can buy it. And then the last little parable he gives us.

The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind when it was full. The good fish and the bad fish. Well, so, does that help you any? I'm not so sure it helped them, and I'm not so sure if it really helps me.

These parables, you've got to really think about. So this week, while I was preparing for preaching, I started, what are examples for us in today's world that we can really relate to very quickly? And I'm not going to be talking about a mustard seed or a jewel or a treasure hidden in a field or catching fish. I've got three examples for you that I hope will help you finish the sentence the kingdom of heaven is like.

Think about that. The kingdom of heaven is like. Back in 1966, 60 years ago, there was a group of individuals that wanted to help young people in the community.

They didn't want to do just a summer camp, so they decided to do a summer outreach program. And it would consist of many different things. Academics, life skills, visual arts, performance, and it would all be based on self-esteem.

Hopefully giving these young children the tools to be more productive in society. They weren't going to be charged anything. It was going to be free tuition.

There would be 5th graders and 6th graders and some pre-K children. 60 years later, TEEP, Trinity Educational Enrichment Program, is thriving and has changed the lives of countless children in this community. The kingdom of heaven is like TEEP.

Second example. In 2005, 21 years ago, the city of New Orleans was reeling from Katrina. And there was a group of individuals who said, you know, we need to not only feed the hungry, but we need to feed the people rebuilding our city.

And then when the people that were rebuilding the city, most of them went on their way, these individuals said, you know, we have a very hungry city. So an organization began called Trinity Loaves and Fishes. 21 years later, they have a beautiful truck wrapped in Trinity colors that delivers food hot and cold.

Over 200, more than that, volunteers, an army of volunteers make sandwiches and hot food. 10,000 community hours are done every year. 55,000 lunch meals, bags and snacks are made every year.

10,000 hot meals are made every year. Trinity Loaves and Fishes feeds 65,000 meals in a year. The kingdom of heaven is like TLF.

Third example. In 2019, a seven-year-old boy from Trinity School was diagnosed with cancer, Walker Beery. It rocked Trinity School and it rocked Trinity Church, not to mention rocking his family and friends.

Two years later, in the year 2021, he was at Children's Hospital getting treatment and a little girl, another cancer patient, gave him a teddy bear. And he was so moved by that teddy bear, so moved that he told his mom and dad that he wanted to do something and they were kind of hoping he would start something after all the treatment was over, but he insisted. He went home and he recruited his little sister and they started a lemonade stand.

You know how much they made from that little lemonade stand? \$3,000. It was in 2021. And he then started, it was all his idea, Kids Join the Fight.

You may have seen those signs on doors all across the city of New Orleans. And by that summer of 2021, before he lost his battle with cancer, they raised children around the city \$500,000. In the years since then, five years since then, during the month of September, which is Pediatric Cancer Month Awareness, they have raised in the last five years \$5 million.

And now, in November, they are breaking ground on Walker's Imaginarium at the Manning Family Hospital. And there are lemonade stands and dog walks and selling of bracelets during the month of September in every state in the Union. The Kingdom of Heaven is like Walker Berry and Kids Join the Fight.

I just gave you three big examples. They don't have to be big. You can do them as an individual where no one sees what you're doing.

You could help at any of these. At TEEP, TLF, Kids Join the Fight. You could join them today.

You could help them today if that's what you wanted to do. It's all about seeking the Kingdom. Jesus never says in the Gospel, go work for the Kingdom.

He says, go seek the Kingdom. And when you seek it, you find it. And when you find it, you implement it into your own world and then things change.

So here are some small examples. When you go into the world and you are kind and respectful to someone, you are seeking the Kingdom. When you go into the world and you love someone that you don't like, I know that's hard to believe, even someone who votes different than you, you are seeking the Kingdom.

If you go into the world and you forgive someone who has wronged you terribly, but you forgive them anyway, you are seeking the Kingdom. There was a man who walked out of the 8 o'clock service this morning and he said, now, what do I got to do with the Kingdom? And I said, seek it. Seek it.

Listen, this is going to hurt a little bit, what I'm getting ready to say. This is going to make you feel a little uncomfortable. It's not enough just coming to church.

It's not. I love the fact that you're here. Love that you're here.

I love this community. But it's not enough for us just to come to church and go on with our world and our life and do nothing. If we're going to seek the Kingdom, then we have to go into the world and do something.

Like Walker did. Like the people that started TLF did. Like the people that started what they did.

We got to do something. We got to seek it. You know the song.

You're going to sing it with me. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.

Allelu Allelu Allelu Amen.