

Worship At Home July 26, 2020

Centering Prayer:

God of quiet contemplation,
Grant that we will be able to take time.
Time from our busy lives,
To reflect on your word,
And be refreshed by your Spirit.
Amen

Music

"How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmlMau0WtSE>

Opening Prayer:

Help us to learn from your Word, O God.
Guide your Spirit to reveal your intent for us.
Open our eyes and ears to your message,
and to the messenger.
Create in us a hunger and desire,
to be a messenger too.
Amen

Scripture Reading

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it 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."

The Parable of the Yeast

He 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."

Three Parables

"The 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.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Treasures New and Old

"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And 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."

Reflection: Similes and Metaphors

There are six, count them, six, similes in today's Gospel lesson.

Similes and Metaphors are still teaching tools that are still employed today. They take the student on a journey to bring them from the known to the, as yet, unknown. To take something that is familiar and compare it to something unfamiliar, in order to understand what it is like.

One of the more famous anti-drug ads of the '80s was the egg in the frying pan ad that compared your brain on drugs to an egg being fried

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOnENVylxPI>). I don't know how effective it was at reducing drug use, but it is a good example of metaphor.

You can probably think of lots of ads that include similes and metaphors: "it's like having a tiger in your tank" or "State Farm: Like A Good Neighbor" or "Chevrolet: Built Like A Rock."

There is a good reason to use this style in advertising and in teaching: it encourages not only the expansion of knowledge, but the altering of perceptions. It is also a good reason why Jesus employed this teaching tool. By using simile you are attributing all of the good feelings associated with to old idea, into the new concept.

Jesus was about changing minds, and getting people to look at things in a different way. To introduce new concepts like the “kingdom of heaven” he has to use many different similes.

The first two parables present us with something that is small transforming into something many, many times larger. While there may be few of us familiar with a mustard plant today, the pandemic and it’s resulting flurry of bread making, certainly gives us experience with the transforming power of yeast. It also has a big effect on home brewing, but I have not encountered any “beer” parables. The key is, that the kingdom of heaven transforms into something so much bigger than it’s original components.

The next two parables are about the value of the kingdom of heaven to those who desire it. It is so valuable that you would give up all that you have to possess it. If you like pearls, it is the most wonderful one in existence; if you desire treasure, it is the greatest treasure of all. They are surely worth sacrificing everything to attain.

The simile in the next parable has had many themes. In this case it is fish, but it could be wheat and weeds. Jesus probably knew who he was speaking to, and in this instance it was probably fisher folk who heard his message. We are not hearing about the kingdom of heaven this time, but the end of the age. Those who are chosen with share in the kingdom (in case you weren’t paying attention to the last two parables, you really want that), but the alternative is not pleasant.

In the final parable Jesus gives instructions to his followers. He asks them if they understood, and in this he is asking us, as well. Now that we and the disciples understand, we are given a parable to show us what we are to do. If we are the scribes being trained for the kingdom of heaven, we should bring out the treasures, old and new, and take stock of them, study them and share them.

What metaphors and similes best describe how you feel about your faith, church community and relationship with God?

Music

Linea Good sings “Living in the Light”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1KaxreSVyo>

Prayers of the People

Gracious God, we thank you for glimpses of your glory; for the beauty of a prairie sunrise, calling us to our daily tasks; for the wonder of a prairie sunset, calming our busy and sometimes troubled spirits.

There is so much about our world we do not understand. Beside the beauty and the wonder, there are wars, people who hurt and who are hungry, people who are afraid, alone, unhappy. Assure us, loving God, that you have not abandoned your world.

When we despair at the evening news, strengthen our faith and renew our purpose. Set us afire with a vision of your will.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit, God. Grant us the strength to be your people, even when we do not understand.

Amen

From Worship for All Seasons II written by Joan Brown, p. 206

Closing Music

Tell Me the Stories of Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDsua07zmnM>

Blessing

Go out to the world and tell your parables.

Tell of God's never-ending love for us.

Tell of Jesus' ceaseless care for us.

Tell of the Holy Spirit's enduring help for us.

Amen.

Music

St. Hilary's: Keith Scott plays Amazing Grace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvjdm-r5SZA>