

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Matthew 13:44-52

We wish we had a better car or a better house. Perhaps we wish to be well respected by many. Maybe it's wanting a boat or a holiday home in the country. The world's wealth is what we wish all the time to be at our doorstep. But, then we find the hard way that wealth, or popularity, or having everything go our way is not necessarily the good life! We build our Kingdoms on earth where, Jesus warns, things rust, or robbers steal, where flowers fade and moths eat through. No, seek Ye first the Kingdom of God and God's goodness, God's right way, and then the good life, the truly good life, will come your way. And it's not a life of having things go our way all the time, but having things going the right way - God's way.

That's a hard lesson to learn. We want things to go perfectly, don't we? Sometimes, we want to put our happiness in the things we own. But happiness, true joy, is found in what cannot be possessed, but only received. And that joy is what comes from above. The Kingdom of Heaven, said Jesus, is like a man who came across a treasure hidden in a field. He was so happy that he went and sold everything he had and bought that field.

The field came at enormous cost, but the man knew what was beyond.

Jesus told a story about a pearl buyer who found a special pearl. So he sold all his other pearls and bought the one perfect gem. Was that a good business proposition? Probably not. But, the

man wanted what was the best, everything else paled in significance.

Another parable about the Kingdom, Jesus told. A fishing boat went out on the lake. And all sorts of fish were caught; everything was pulled in, both the good and the bad. They sorted through the catch and kept the best. The issue seems to be about collecting valuable things. But some of the fish weren't valuable yet. They were too small, the wrong kind of fish.

Perhaps at a later time, perhaps in another season, those fish that they returned to the sea, would be valuable to catch again. Some things in life we want now! And it is appropriate for some things. But not everything. Older people, more so than younger people, understand better what it means to have patience and wait until the time is right. Let us remember the advice of St. Paul: All things come together for good for them that trust God. We probably won't come across treasures in fields, or collect pearls, or go fishing on a trawler to be in better position to understand these parables like the people who actually heard Jesus tell understood. However, the parables are simple truths about God and His Kingdom, about Christ and His Love.

But something much greater has happened to us. God has sent His Son to be our Saviour. God loves us so much that He asked Jesus to live with us and show us a new way to live. He makes it possible for us to live a new way by giving us His Holy Spirit, the power of God that comes with the new life. It is because Jesus is our Saviour, we can enjoy our life on earth. Even when we have pain and sorrow, we know He is with us. Even when things don't always go our way. We can forgive others because we are forgiven. We can help others because He has helped us.

Even when we die, we know He will raise us from the dead and we will live with Him forever.

Our faith in Jesus makes us forget the other blessings in life, or at least it lets us put them into their proper perspective.

Knowing Jesus becomes the most important part of our life. We want to tell others about Him. We want to tell what He has done for us. All other things in life pale in significance when measured up to Jesus. And this is true joy! This is true living! This is the Kingdom! Isn't it marvellous how things can turn out better, once we put our worries and fears behind us and simply trust in the Lord?

Let us not discount the other gifts in our life. They are good gifts as well, because they also come from God, whether it be that new car, or anything that money can buy. But remember, the gift of Jesus Christ in our lives, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is the greatest gift of all. Knowing Him as our Saviour is the gift that will last forever!

These parables in today's Gospel speak strongly about the nature of faith and what it does, about the nature of God and what he does, and, as usual, God does far more than we normally give God credit for. Jesus says in the first two parables that the smallest faith, the smallest seed of God, the tiny bit of the yeast of righteousness, can transform itself, and those things in contact with it, and so change the world. As Jesus said elsewhere, "If we have faith as small as a mustard seed we can say to the mountains be removed and it will remove itself". Think of it, just a little seed from which can come a mighty bush. Just a little yeast and we can change the entire loaf. Nothing can stop the growing of the seed because the Power of God is in the seed. Nothing can prevent the yeast from spreading because the Power of God is in the yeast.

The mustard seed is the word of the kingdom of God, the word of truth, the word that points the way to the living reality of God

in Christ among us. And the yeast is the word that grows within us, the faith that rises up because that is the nature that God gave it, that rises up and makes new, that brings to life, that revives. There are so many treasures that God has sent our way, so many to value and embrace and hold up; the old law and the prophets with their guidance and their grace, and the new law written in the heart by the Spirit of God; the old rituals with their ability to calm and quiet the heart so that we may meet God, and the new ones which can energize and make fresh a tired soul. There is a great mercy spoken of in all the parables we have heard today, a great love, a great power, a great God, are pointed to in them. It is worth everything, and when embraced, lead to everything of importance in this world and in the world yet to come.

AMEN.