

**ST PAUL'S CHURCH (RONDEBOSCH)
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
27 JULY 2020**

**READINGS: GENESIS 29:1-28//PSALM 105:1-11//ROMANS 8:26-30//
MATTHEW 13:31-33, 44-52**

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Let us pray

*Holy is your name, O LORD.
Grant us now through the help of the Holy Spirit,
that we may receive your word with joy and thanksgiving,
praise you for your goodness,
and give ourselves to you in love and service;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

Do you know these words “**THY KINGDOM COME**”? of course we know these words, it comes from the best known prayer in the Christian world The Lord’s Prayer. Every day millions of people pray “*Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come*”

When we pray “**Thy Kingdom come**” what exactly do we mean by Kingdom?

For many of us the concept kingdom is a geographical and static concept. We think of the Kingdom of Lesotho or the United Kingdom.

It is a place with clear boundaries, it is a place where you can go to. We also think that the Kingdom of God /Heaven is a place – (Paradise) where we will go one day. However in Matthew’s gospel “*The Kingdom of heaven*” which appears 34 times in this gospel does not refer to a place. Kingdom has a more spiritual meaning

The Kingdom of heaven means “**God’s ruling// God’s authority// God’s presence in my life (God’s kingship over his people.)**”

Jesus constantly draws pictures by comparing the kingdom to ordinary things we understand. That’s what we find in today’s Gospel reading. Jesus delivers five, metaphors that impart an impression of God’s kingdom. He says the kingdom is like a mustard seed, like yeast, like a hidden treasure, a valuable pearl, and the kingdom is like a fishing net.—stories about our ordinary daily work.

Let us unpack these metaphors (parables) **to understand the value of the Kingdom of heaven**

In V31 “the Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree and the birds of the air perched in its branches”.

In the east mustard is not a garden herb but a field plant. It does literally grow to be a tree. It is common to see a cloud of birds around such trees for they love the little black mustard seed

According to C. J Ryle *“The beginnings of the Gospel started very small. It was like “a mustard seed cast into the garden.” It was a religion which seemed at first so feeble, and helpless, and powerless, that it would not grow or last. Its first founder Jesus was, one who was poor in this world, and ended His life by dying the death of on the cross. Its first followers were a little company, whose number probably did not exceed a thousand when Jesus left the world. Its first preachers were a few fishermen and publicans, who were, most of them, unlearned and ignorant men. Its first starting point was a despised corner of the earth, called Judea, a small province of the Roman Empire but now 2000 years later the gospel is being preach all over the world and it has millions of followers*

V33 Again Jesus asked “What shall I compare the kingdom of God too? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed and it worked all through the dough”

Yeast is a small unimpressive looking substance, but when mixed with flour, it will make the flour rise. Yeast does not work instantly; it is a time-consuming process. For a long time it goes unnoticed. It’s hidden in the flour. Yet, the yeast transforms the flour and creates bread, --the coming of God’s kingdom transforms the world.

The kingdom of heaven is transformative and uplifting. It is the presence of God’s kingdom that empowers God’s people to rise above life’s circumstance The kingdom of heaven starts from the dedicated lives of individual men and women like you and me. In the place where we work or live we can be that mustard seed, that yeast of the kingdom of heaven and gradually we will have

an impact and change our communities especially now during this challenging and difficult time

In v44 *the kingdom of heaven (God) is like a treasure hidden in a field, where upon discovery, a man sold everything he had in order to buy the field?*

This man probably worked on the farm when he found the treasure. He was busy with ordinary daily work. We can also find the Kingdom (the presence of Christ) when we are busy with ordinary daily life (at work, at home, at school) It would be sad to think that we will only find God and be close to him in churches and religious places. With the Lockdown and COVID 19 pandemic we have experienced the presence of God in our homes and in our own personal prayer time.

In v45 *“The kingdom of heaven (God) is like a merchant who discovered a valuable pearl and sold everything he had and bought it”*

The man who was searching for pearls was spending his life in the search for this particular pearl— until he finds it he is satisfied and sold everything Sometimes we search for meaning, significance, hope and purpose in life Sometimes we search through all sorts of substitutes before we find the Kingdom of Heaven (God). Our studies, our work, our sports and material and financial security. It is not wrong to want to have all these things – but even if we have all this we realize our life is still not fulfilled, there is still something missing. We still don’t have that unusual pearl.

Jesus is saying that once you grasp the value of God’s kingdom, you will go to extreme measures to obtain it. Nothing compares to God’s kingdom, but it requires a wholehearted commitment, such that we will risk everything and surrender our hearts and our lives to God and be part of his kingdom.

Finally, *Jesus says that the kingdom 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.*

The net contained various kinds of fish. As in the parable of the weeds, Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven as diverse and inclusive.

All are brought into the kingdom, again, the angels come to “separate the evil from the righteous” (13:49), our work is to cast the net and bring in fish and leave the judgement to God.

CONCLUSION

My dear friends *The Kingdom of heaven (God)* is not a place. It is God's rule, God's authority, God's Kingship in my life. It is God's presence in my life. To accept God's rule in my life is to surrender my will, my heart and my life to God. If God is the ruler of my life. I will experience God's joy, love, compassion and fulfillment. I will enjoy true happiness, true satisfaction. I will enjoy life to the fullest.

St Augustine of Hippo wrote” *Late have I loved you O Beauty, so ancient and so new, for behold you were within me and I was outside and I sought you outside. Lord you made us for yourself and our hearts is restless till they rest in you*

And when God is ruler of my life. I must go and reveal him to others. I must be like the yeast and the mustard seed and allow God's power to transform me so that, as small and insignificant as I am I can draw others into the Kingdom of heaven (God) by showing God's love, care, justice peace and compassion to others.

Mother Theresa said “**Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love”**

My dear friends are your heart restless this morning?

Am I willing to surrender my life and my heart to experience God's Kingdom in my life?