

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 11:25

R¹. Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;

you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

R². Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 13:24-43; L106A

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be likened

to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off.

When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well.

The slaves of the householder came to him and said, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field?"

Where have the weeds come from? He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him,

'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them.

Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters,

"First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

He proposed another parable to them.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants.

Reflecting on the Gospel

Earthly kingdoms are marked by geographic boundaries, the will of the ruler, and birthright. This gospel speaks of the "kingdom of heaven," of God's kingdom. This divine kingdom's geographic boundaries are all that is. God's will rules this kingdom and the kingdom is visible whenever God's will is being done. The firstborn of this kingdom is the divine Son, but we are all heirs of this kingdom through our baptism.

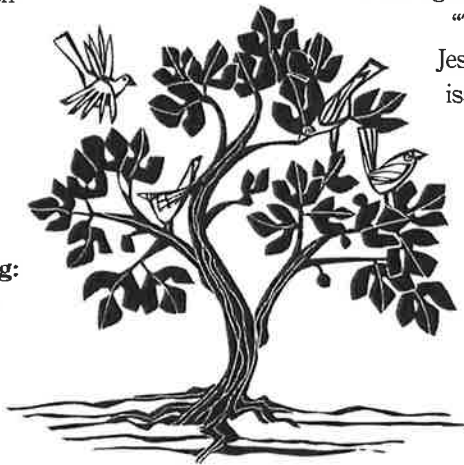
"The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." Whatever parable Jesus uses to teach about the kingdom of heaven, always at issue is growth, abundance, increase. While "the enemy" may try to thwart the kingdom, in the end God will prevail and "the righteous will shine like the sun." So, "the kingdom of heaven is like" those of us who hear and live the Good News Jesus teaches. We ourselves are "the kingdom of heaven" when we live according to God's ways, accepting the gracious will of God as the rule of our lives. We ourselves become the spaciousness of God's kingdom, making visible the divine Presence and will to all those we touch with our own presence.

Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven as we presently experience it with room for growth and maturation: there are weeds among the wheat, a bush is in growth, the dough is rising. The wheat, bush, dough are not finished products; it takes time and patience to bring forth the desired good end. In this present age we are to live with patience and confident assurance that the kingdom of heaven will become fully manifest in us: we will be a harvest, we will be a large bush, we will be a loaf of bread. The mystery of the kingdom, of course, is that while the end is guaranteed—life will come forth—all of us must live faithfully and work diligently if we wish to reap the fruits of following God's will—Life everlasting.

In the end it is less important to understand God's kingdom with our minds than it is to live according to the values of the kingdom. The first reading lists some of these values for us: the children of the kingdom are to live like the Master of the kingdom—showing the kind of care, leniency, clemency, justice, and kindness that instill in others hope rather than despair, fecundity rather than barrenness, the desire to do good rather than evil. We can come confidently to the day of judgment by being good disciples of the Master. As we grow in our discipleship, it is patience and hope in the final outcome that sustains us so that in the end we will be counted among the "righteous [who] shine like the sun."

Living the Paschal Mystery

The impulse of the first parable is to pull the weeds. The impulse during our whole Christian living is to be impatient with ourselves as we grow in our discipleship, meeting challenges and temptations along the way. Part of living the paschal mystery is to be patient with ourselves, especially when we have failed. The mercy, forgiveness, leniency, justice, and patience of God encourage repentance (see first reading). Even our mistakes are ways that we have "ears . . . to hear" and learn better the ways of God. God's final judgment comes at the "end of the age" when, hopefully, all of us have lived the ways of patience and faithfulness and have borne fruit. As we grow into being God's kingdom, as we learn better to live our birthright, as we grasp more fully what God's will is for us in our daily living and respond faithfully, we become more like the firstborn Son, more like worthy citizens of the "kingdom of heaven."



Continued in Appendix A, p. 296, or Matt 13:24-30 in Appendix A, p. 296.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: The kingdom of heaven is like, good seed, full-grown, whole bunch was leavened, the enemy, the righteous will shine like the sun

To the point: “The kingdom of heaven is like . . .” Whatever parable Jesus uses to teach about the kingdom of heaven, always at issue is growth, abundance, increase. While “the enemy” may try to thwart the kingdom, in the end God will prevail and “the righteous will shine like the sun.” So, “the kingdom of heaven is like” those of us who hear and live the Good News Jesus teaches. We ourselves are “the kingdom of heaven” when we live according to God’s ways.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The link between these readings is judgment. In face of God’s judgment, the first reading gives us “good ground for hope” and the gospel gives us the promise that despite the presence of evil, “the righteous will shine like the sun.”

to experience: Our image of earthly kingdoms is either in terms of wealth, pageantry, and privilege or in terms of power, violence, and corruption. Our experience of “the kingdom of heaven” comes to us through acts of forgiveness, the healing of suffering, humble service, obeying God’s will, and loving our enemies. What a contrast!

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In these verses from Psalm 86 we beg God to listen pleading and give us strength. The parables told by Jesus in the gospel clear the cause of our begging: alongside the good God has planted in church and the world, so much bad exists; so many starts toward the of the kingdom are just insignificant, tiny seeds; a little yeast leavens sure of flour, but the work of kneading must first be done if the bread rise. We need the grace of patience and persistence. And we need the of God, this God who understands how slow growth can be (gospel) a leaves room for human repentance (first reading). As we sing this psalm we ask our “good and forgiving” God (psalm refrain) to share some of vine leniency, patience, and persistence with us.

to psalmist preparation: What gives you confidence that God is b the kingdom of heaven to full growth within you? within the world? V you need to show yourself some of God’s patience and leniency? W he need to grant this patience and leniency to others?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- For me, the “kingdom of heaven” is like . . . because . . .
- The growth I treasure is . . . the abundance I experience is . . . the increase I seek is . . .
- I hear and live the Good News Jesus teaches about the kingdom when . . . by . . .

PRESIDERS

When I see “the enemy” trying to thwart God’s kingdom, I . . .

DEACONS

My serving others helps me hear and live the Good News of the promise of the kingdom in that . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

Good hospitality within a community is like yeast in flour because . . .

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 23, 2017

Gospel (cont.)

Matt 13:24-43; L106A

It becomes a large bush,
and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.”

He spoke to them another parable.
“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast
that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour
until the whole batch was leavened.”

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables.
He spoke to them only in parables,
to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:
*I will open my mouth in parables,
I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation
of the world.*

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house.
His disciples approached him and said,
“Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”
He said in reply, “He who sows good seed is the Son of Man,
the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom.
The weeds are the children of the evil one,
and the enemy who sows them is the devil.
The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.
Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire,
so will it be at the end of the age.
The Son of Man will send his angels,
and they will collect out of his kingdom
all who cause others to sin and all evildoers.
They will throw them into the fiery furnace,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.
Then the righteous will shine like the sun
in the kingdom of their Father.
Whoever has ears ought to hear.”