

Rev. Randall Hubbard
1Kings 3:5, 7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
July 23-24, 2011

In our gospel this weekend, Jesus asks his disciples, “Do you understand all these things?” Do you understand? Do you understand what has been taught using the parables? The question that Jesus asked his disciples. It is a question that we, too, must pause and ponder for ourselves – do we understand what Jesus teaches us about the kingdom of heaven?

But maybe a more basic question is do we even *care* about the kingdom of heaven? Does the kingdom of heaven have any importance to us whatsoever as we go about living our lives? In teaching about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus teaches that the kingdom is like seed being thrown out, being planted, that sometimes it is not well received and other times it is well received to where it produces fruit in abundance. But it’s also like seed that is scattered and an evil one – the enemy – comes along and scatters seed of the weed among it, so that we understand that the kingdom of heaven exists alongside the good with the evil.

But he also tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed – tiny – that grows beyond all imagining; and that the kingdom of heaven too is growing in our midst. Deep rooted, establishing itself.

But it’s also like yeast that is put with flour to knead into to make dough, that at times is difficult because of the life to accept the kingdom, but yet there’s something appealing and tasty about that kingdom that draws us in.

And then he tells us this weekend that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking that finest pearl. Or that person who finds a treasure hidden. And both go and sell everything, everything in order to acquire it. The question for us – do we, are we willing to give everything, or to give up everything for the kingdom? Is there anything that is more important to us in our lives than the kingdom of heaven, than being in relationship with our God, because that’s ultimately what the kingdom of heaven is about is that relationship with God. Is there anything in our life, any relationship, any thing that is more important? That’s the real question that Jesus puts before us.

He goes so far that the kingdom will be in its fulfillment at some point. And at that time, there will be a reckoning! And the good will be preserved, and the bad will be destroyed. On our part, it is a matter of as a people of faith asking ourselves the question – do we understand what Jesus is teaching us about the kingdom? What that call to come to follow is all about? That it does require of us great sacrifice and a willingness and an openness to God to not only what God asks of us in being in relationship with God, but what God asks of us in being in relationship with one another! Are we participating in that kingdom that is happening in our midst that's not yet fulfilled? Are we open to the question? For it does come down to do we really want to be a part of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God that has been prepared for us?

We understand that as Jesus tells us being a part of that kingdom is looking back at where we were, gleaning the good, bringing it forth into the now, using the now preparing for the future. But always focused on the kingdom. It's not a matter of what once was, it's over and it's done, but that we look at it and we see that there was goodness there, the kingdom happening at that point, bringing it forward now to be a people who are renewed in faith. Refocused on who we are and what we are to be about as God's people. That it is the kingdom of heaven that awaits us.

But it still comes down to - is that what we want?

Do we understand what Jesus asks of us?