

## Trinity 6 St Marylebone 11am

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

During the Sundays of Trinity we hear the parables of Jesus.

Over the last two Sundays we have been in a rustic world of wheat and weeds, good soil and poor soil; the world of sowers and reapers.

Today, we are confronted not just by one parable but by five and the images chosen by Jesus are drawn, not from the familiar everyday world of agriculture, but from the worlds of fishing, cooking and the exotic world of fine jewelry and treasure.<sup>1</sup>

The one thing that all these parables have in common is that they are about the 'Kingdom'.

The 'Kingdom' says Jesus, is like a mustard seed, like leaven, like treasure, like a fine pearl, and like a dragnet.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 13.31–33, 44–52

Did Jesus' first hearers make any sense out of what he was saying? Any interpretations we read in our gospels are probably later church-shaped additions, 'glosses' to try to explain the inexplicable; attempts by the earliest Christian communities to make some sense out of Jesus' more complex and enigmatic sayings.

The key to the parables is that they are all about 'the Kingdom'. That for which we pray every time we pray the Lord's Prayer. A reality that is here, but not only here, a reality that is now, but is also yet to come.

The 'Kingdom' that is the reality, the tangible, quantifiable, expression of God's absolute rule, where the contradictions of life are resolved, where the poor in spirit find themselves blessed; where mourners find their comfort; where the meek discover that they have inherited the earth; where those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice know themselves to be vindicated; where those who have shown mercy to others receive mercy themselves; where the innocent and the pure see God face to face, and where those who have striven all their lives to reconcile and make peace know themselves to be God's most precious children.

This idea, this notion of the 'Kingdom' was not new

even in Jesus' day.

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed the vision<sup>2</sup> of a restored and flourishing community in which children do not die prematurely; in which older people live out their days in dignity; in which people are able to build houses and live in them; in which there is such peace and security that there is ample time to plant and nurture vineyards and live long enough to eat and enjoy their fruit.

This is not 'pie in the sky when you die' stuff, this is something to strive for now. It is not something to leave to God to accomplish in the fullness of his time, but something to get one's hands dirty with now, something for which one must roll up one's sleeves and get on with.

Talking about it, praying for it, fasting for it is simply not enough, as the prophets say over and over again. The Kingdom will, can, only come by loosing the chains of injustice now; by untying the cords of the yoke now; by setting the oppressed free now.

It is only by doing these things, rather than talking about doing them, or reading about doing them or expecting others to do them, rather than doing them

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 65.20-23

oneself that the Kingdom's light will break forth like the dawn and the glory of the Lord will be revealed.<sup>3</sup>

For Isaiah, for Amos, for Jesus, the Kingdom was a present reality, within reach if only people would get on with it; if only people would feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give water to thirsty and care for the sick.

Doing nothing, means that the Kingdom lies forever out of reach, but each time someone does something, the Kingdom is enacted and draws that bit closer.

Jesus' message, spoken over and over again, is that love is experienced through action<sup>4</sup>, that when God is alive in people's lives it will change their way of living and, through their changed living, the Kingdom will be ushered in.

The Kingdom is the living fruit of transformed, redeemed people living God-centred, God-shaped, God-filled lives: lives which are constantly shaped by striving for justice, healing and peace.

The 'Kingdom' comes, says Jesus, when people start living it.

One simply cannot be in God, be part of Christ's body

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 58.8

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 25.35-40

without being God's voice and God's worker in this world, God's agent, God's hands and feet and eyes and ears and lips here and now.

If one is indeed in Christ, there simply is no option but to be one who longs for the Kingdom, who works for the Kingdom, is shaped by the Kingdom, is a witness to the Kingdom.

If one is indeed in Christ, there simply is no option but to be one who strives to be a peacemaker, a healer, a reconciler; someone who works for justice.

Somehow, Jesus says, the Kingdom is like a mustard seed, like leaven, like treasure, like an enormously expensive and fabulous pearl, even like a dragnet. Exactly how, we probably can't say, but what we can say is that the power to bring about that 'Kingdom' is entrusted to us, is placed into our hands.

So, let us roll up our sleeves and get down to business!

Amen.