

Pentecost 7A

July 27, 2014

Ken Wratten at St Stephen's, San Jose

Genesis 29:15-28      Jacob is deceived by Laban, much like Jacob deceived Isaac and Esau

Romans 8:26-39      The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 Parables of mustard, leaven, treasure, pearl, fishing net

## Thy Kingdom Come On Earth

These five parables from Jesus expand last week's teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven. Since we are invited to be residents of that Kingdom, it is worth our learning what we can about the neighborhood.

Mustard seed and leaven teach that amazing results come from seemingly insignificant beginnings.

I think about my own journey from Boy Scouts, radio merit badge, crystal radio, ham radio, electrical engineering, move to CA, people management, project management, access to a seminary within commute distance. All of this brought together a pretty good mix of experiences and skills needed for where St Stephen's was in 2002, and to bring us to where we are now. Think of the path that brought you to this church, to this community, to this base camp for your own ministry.

The parables of the treasure hidden in a field, and the jewel merchant who searches for and finds a great pearl teach that the K of G reshapes our priorities, and is prized above anything else.

Consider the power to shift priorities that comes from AA, Cursillo, a habit of prayer, practicing the command to Love Thy neighbor, and the concept of having a personal Rule of Life. Consider the reshaped priorities that come from our sponsoring Sudanese children in boarding school, and making Sunday the day to meet here to share worship together. These experiences reshape our priorities.

The parable of the fishermen who cast out a net teaches that God alone will oversee judgment, and it will happen in God's time.

We learn to let go, and let God. We learn how to deal with, work with, and honor EGR people. We make time to focus on ourselves NOT being the EGR person in the group.

Paul wrote of a Kingdom focused life: Relying on the Spirit working in us to guide our prayers. Be confident that God is working good for those who are called to God's purposes.

The power of prayer is not from perfectly worded CONTENT as much as it is from Christ-minded INTENT.

Luke 17:20-21, “<sup>20</sup>One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, “When will the Kingdom of God come?” Jesus replied, “The Kingdom of God can’t be detected by visible signs. <sup>21</sup>You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘It’s over there!’ For the Kingdom of God is already among you.”

Theologian Frederick Buechner (BEEK-ner) wrote,  
 “If we only had eyes to see and ears to hear and wits to understand, we would know that the Kingdom of God in the sense of holiness, goodness, beauty is as close as breathing and is crying out to be born both within ourselves and within the world; we would know that the Kingdom of God is what we all of us hunger for above all other things even when we don’t know its name or realize that it’s what we’re starving to death for. The Kingdom of God is where our best dreams come from and our truest prayers. We glimpse it at those moments when we find ourselves being better than we are and wiser than we know. We catch sight of it when at some moment of crisis a strength seems to come to us that is greater than our own strength. The Kingdom of God is where we belong. It is home, and whether we realize it or not, I think we are all of us homesick for it.”

We learn from the mustard seed and from yeast to trust that even the smallest things in life can yield great results. Life in the Kingdom is full of adventure and joyful surprises somewhat like finding hidden treasure. It has worth infinitely beyond anything we can imagine—like the pearl of great price. And even though there may be weeds in the field and inedible fish in the catch—some undesirable companions and disappointments along the way—we can be confident that it is *God’s* task, not ours, to sort this all out; because the Kingdom will prevail in the end.

Our invitation to be residents of God’s Kingdom is an invitation as community and individually; The invitation asks us to:

Notice the signs of God-at-work in the world around us.

Notice more than the chaos reported in the world news.

Notice new seeds as the first step to reach maturity in life;

Notice raw ingredients becoming food for a productive life;

Notice experiences shifting the course of our life, but bringing change that produces blessings.

Notice the qualities in people, even the very well hidden qualities, and recognize the gift of inner peace that comes with leaving judgments to God.

We now have five new insights into the Kingdom of God; worth any price to live there – rather, worth any price to bring that life into this place, into this life, today.

Amen.