

Homily. 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 29/30 July 2023.

We hear the word 'parable' a lot. Jesus often spoke to the crowds in parables. This means that he used simple stories packed with meaning as one of his favourite ways to tell us the great truths about God and faith and right moral living. Jesus did this because he knew very well what we so often forget; that the longest journey we ever make is the one from our heads to our hearts, and the shortest way to make this journey is a story. If we listen to Jesus parables, and I mean really listen to them, imagining and pondering them, we'll hear many meanings that take us from rational, head-thinking into heartfelt believing, purposeful action and a meaningful way of living each day as it comes.

St. Matthew grouped 7 of these parables, all about the kingdom of Heaven, into Chapter 13, right at the heart of his gospel. Not only is this the central chapter of Matthew, it's one of the most important in all of the gospels. Over the last 2 weekends we've heard about how God works amongst us, about our different responses to God's gift, about how God patiently, gently and generously keeps on working to bring about what's best for us and for the world. Now, in these last 3 parables, we hear about just how valuable the kingdom is for us; it's like a long lost treasure we find buried in a field; like a perfect, prized pearl, searched for and then found one day in a market place. Jesus is telling us that unearthing such a treasure, that finding such a gem which fulfils our searching is worth everything we have. Such is the comfort of God's presence, promise, love and mercy. Such is the hope and comfort offered by God's truth, justice, life and peace. The kingdom realises our salvation and that of the world.

The parable of the dragnet cast into the sea is similar to the story of the wheat and darnel weed we listened to last weekend. Our world and society, our own lives and souls, too, are a mix of both good wheat and weeds, of edible useful fish and other stuff dredged up that no one wants, not even us. Many of us want this all sorted out, preferably by yesterday, but God doesn't. Why? Well, perhaps because it's the weeds help keep us humble and searching and the troublesome rubbish that inspires our best humanity of courage, integrity, kindness and compassion. So, yes, improve we must what we can, but the final sorting must be left up to the wisdom and mercy of God.

So, it's to our God that we turn and must always return, asking now that the gift God has given us in the passion of his Son with a love beyond all telling, may come to profit us for our salvation, and for the salvation of all.