

## Coop's Scoops #75 July 19<sup>th</sup>: Liturgy and Sermon

### Our readings today:

Genesis 29:18-30 Psalm 103:1-13 Romans 8: 18-25

### The Collect:

**Almighty God, your Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence. Give us pure hearts and constant wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen**

### **The Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:24-36, 44-45, 51-53**

<sup>24</sup>He put before them **another parable**: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup>but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup>And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup>He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ <sup>29</sup>But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” <sup>31</sup>He put before them **another parable**: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; <sup>32</sup>it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” <sup>33</sup>He told them **another parable**: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three

measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”<sup>34</sup> Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing.<sup>35</sup> This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.”<sup>36</sup> Then he left the crowds and went into the house. (Jesus told **another parable**) The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Then Jesus asked His disciples)...<sup>51</sup> **“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.”**<sup>52</sup> **And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”**<sup>53</sup> **When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.**

### **The Sermon:**

Today, we are going to begin at the end. Start with the last words of Jesus in our Gospel reading. Jesus asked His disciples: “**Do you understand these things?**” The disciples say “**YES**”. And Jesus says, “**Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.**” What Jesus has taught, He expects His disciples to also teach. That’s what scribes did...learned the law so that they could explain it, write it, and pass it on to others. Jesus “scribes” were to pass on His teachings about the Kingdom of Heaven. And so, my fellow disciples, are we.

At first hearing, the Kingdom parables seem rather lovely, and quite understandable. But that’s because we don’t have first Century ears! Consider the parable of the mustard seed. A tiny seed becomes a very big plant and the birds of the air come and make nests. Sounds wonderful! But **Not** to those present that day. To them, mustard plants were noxious weeds... they multiplied like dandelions in our lawns. To think of a mustard plant getting bigger than the ordinary mustard bush and becoming a tree would be absurd. As if I told you I planted a strawberry seed, and it became the

largest tree in my garden. Strawberries don't do that...neither did mustard seeds. So what **did** it mean to them? Well, the people of Israel were expecting the Kingdom of Heaven to come when a great leader rallied the troops and overthrew the occupying Romans and restored Israel to full glory. Jesus is telling them that the Birds of the Air ( which meant to Jewish ears "THE GENTILES") are going to be living and nesting and raising families right there with the Jews in the Kingdom. NOT AT ALL what was wanted or expected.

Then there is the yeast and the flour. Sounds to us just like good home baking. Try hearing it their way. The Kingdom of heaven is like a woman taking a tiny bit of yeast and having to somehow make it stretch not just for one recipe of bread but for three whole recipes. Where would she find a bin big enough to mix that? How many hours of punching, stretching, covering, waiting, punching, stretching and pummeling that mixture would it take? Her muscles would ache, and she wouldn't even want to think about eating bread ever again! Jesus is telling them that in the Kingdom of Heaven, whatever bread there is must feed everyone, and that it will take extraordinary sacrifice to get that bread ready. Jesus had taught them already that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. That was the yeast. Jesus would soon be saying: **"Take this bread...it is MY Body"**. The Bread of Heaven would be not just three enormous batches, but an inexhaustible supply of bread to feed the hearts and minds and souls of billions of people. The Kingdom of Heaven satisfies the human soul. It is always enough.

We move to **another parable** about the man who sold everything to obtain a pearl of great price. What kind of a pearl would be worth selling his home, his animals, his farm, his books, and all his wife and children's possessions? What could possibly be worth that? The Kingdom of Heaven **has** such a treasure: One which Jesus came to baptize us with....the Holy Spirit. That is the one great Pearl, but it is not "buyable". It is not to be "owned" by the children of Israel. It is a gift of grace, to be cherished and available to every son and daughter of faith. Worth everything, and given in love.

The Kingdom of Heaven is how our world would be if everyone lived like Jesus taught...if the Beatitudes were really the creed for all people. And as Scribes in the Kingdom, we are to speak about and pass on to others those treasures which we have found in Jesus. That is bringing treasure out of that which is NEW.

There is also treasure in that which is OLD. So what old treasure can we glean from the ancient story of Jacob, Laban, Leah and Rachel? We are tempted, from the perspective of just this world view, to chuckle a bit at how Jacob the trickster got tricked. Sort of do the old “What goes around comes around” routine. But that whole notion is not Kingdom of Heaven thinking. Let me share two examples of what IS Kingdom thinking.

**First**, we can see that people who are chosen and blessed by God are not incapable of evil. Nor are they shielded from the natural consequences of their actions. Jacob was Abraham’s grandson, he was son of Isaac, the first child of the promise. Jacob was to be in the ancestral line of the Messiah. So he was most certainly chosen. Still, the one who lied, was **lied to**; the one who liked to stay home and read had to work for fourteen years to attain his heart’s desire; and although Jacob did get his promised descendants, those children were born into a family dynamic so tragic that it makes the “Real Housewives” soaps look like the Brady Bunch. The jealousy and manipulations come to a climax when the brothers toss the son named Joseph into a pit wearing his coat of many colours. Even that did eventually work out for good ... when Joseph forgave his brothers and welcomed them to partake of the grain in Pharaoh’s silos, thus preserving the descendents of Abraham from death by famine. **Kingdom thinking ONE: God’s love works for good through all things, and all manner of people. God does not choose the “fit”; He “fits” the chosen.**

**Secondly**, when life goes wrong, **it’s a really bad idea to play the blame game.** Every single person in this story can be seen as both a good guy-or girl-and a bad guy-or girl. Laban for example is clearly out to cheat Jacob. But he also has the future of his

less lovely older daughter at heart. **Jacob** has done some awful things, but here he seems willing to work hard and to work honestly. Rachel and Leah are both in an impossible situation, orchestrated by the men surrounding them. Clearly they are victims. But when we read on, we will see that they are not all goodness and light either...they treat each other with great cruelty. **Kingdom thinking Two: Only God can sort out evil and good, and we need to let Him do it without our assistance!**

As we began, so now we finish. I ask you...do you understand these things? Can you glimpse the Kingdom of Heaven in what Jesus taught? Can you see some treasure in the story of Jacob? If so, and if it sounds like good news, then it's time to spread that new and that old treasure around. Amen.

**Prayer of Response:**

We thank you, Lord Jesus for your very clear teaching that we are called to be Kingdom people sharing the "old" and the "new" with others as You give us the grace, power and strength to do so. Thank you that we don't have to be "fit", "perfect" to be Your messengers, to be Your scribes, understanding that you will "fit" us to the job over our lives journeys. Bless all who honour and love You this day, and renew our minds according to Your will and purpose. Amen.

**The Blessing:** Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly, above all that we ask or think, be glory in the Church throughout all ages world without end; and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain you always!  
Amen.

Love from Judie+