

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 Parables of the Kingdom

Here we have five short parables, '*The kingdom of heaven is like...*'.

Each contains a truth about God and our calling to live in God's Kingdom.

v31-32 Mustard seed. Begins very **small**, grows very large. The good news began with one person, Jesus, with twelve disciples, and through the Church has spread into all the world. Don't disparage small beginnings. Great organisations, movements for good, often begin with one person's idea, a few people praying, one person's life. Nearly all missions, and many charities, began this way.

v33 Yeast. God's Kingdom is not always visible, but affects **all** it touches. All of our lives, all of society. God wants to influence all we do. '*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,*' as the psalmist says.

v44 Treasure. Discovering God's Kingdom brings great joy. The earth was a '*bank*' for ordinary people, esp in trouble, war,.. No sharp practice here. Jewish law was '*finders keepers*'. There is real surprise, as the man realises this find is worth more than everything else he has. cf *Paul on Damascus Road,...* Phil 3:8, '*I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*'

Maybe some of us stumbled upon the K **unexpectedly**, we weren't searching for God, but God found us, which took us by surprise.

To accept this call of God may mean giving up other aims and ambitions, habits or ways of life dear to us. But there is no other way to peace of heart and mind, to know God and experience his love for us. The finder could have ignored the treasure, tried to forget about it, maybe not wanting his life to change, and unwilling to sell all he had to possess it.

But he didn't, he recognised the value and joy of the Kingdom. cf *rich young ruler*.

v45-46 Pearl. Similar to treasure, but here found **after searching**. This recognises the loveliness and value of the Kingdom. Beyond the discipline, sacrifice, self-denial, the cross, there lies a supremely lovely thing which is found nowhere else. There are other lovely things in life, other pearls, but only one that is worth all we have. The object of this merchant's search is worth everything, and he acts straightaway to obtain it. Some come to the Kingdom after a long search, intellectual, experiential, or spiritual.

Some insights, understandings, come to us after searching the Scriptures, our lives, or the world around us. When we find this pearl there is a compulsion, we know that we must act to enjoy it, whatever the cost. When Jesus called the first disciples, they left their fishing nets *immediately* and followed him.

v47-48 Net. Familiar scene to those fishermen disciples. A catch had to be sorted into the good and the worthless. In this world, in the Church and in the Kingdom, good and bad, holy and evil exist together, but there will come a **separation**. (As last Sunday, *wheat and weeds*) This parable teaches us patience, church will never be pure, and God allows time for repentance. God alone is the judge who separates, and he is just, loving and merciful.

Lessons for our lives:

God often starts to work in small ways, but his work will grow and increase, and reach out to touch people everywhere, because it is God's work and he will do it. We may come across God's Kingdom unexpectedly or after searching. But when we do, the treasure is worth everything to possess it, and we are compelled to follow God whatever the cost. It is the gateway to the fullest and deepest joy and peace in all the world. Salvation is a free gift of God, but to enjoy it we must be prepared to let go of all that would get in the way. We cannot accept and do God's will if our hearts are hankering after something else. And in his patience God allows time for us to find his Kingdom, and in the end all evil will be separated and banished from the Kingdom of God.

'Let anyone with ears listen!'