

The Kingdom of Heaven: Seat belts and helmets suggested, not required
Homily by S Kay Young
St. Martin's Episcopal Church
Sunday July 26, 2020

I have always loved the parables of Jesus. My Dad spoke in parables; I was right at home. I didn't expect to understand. I kinda thought I had a basic idea, though. And it was often either fun or instructive to picture myself as the various characters in the stories. Jesus put on quite a show of them in Matthew. And this reading is like the finale of the fireworks. The kingdom is like this! Or this! OR THIS!!!

The Kingdom of Heaven. Wow. Let's see: it's beautiful, peaceful, and happy, serene even. Who can NOT picture a smiling Jesus talking to a seated crowd with kids in the front, all leaning forward to hear His every word. We still profess to be interested... every week, if not every day we pray the Lord's prayer and the phrase "Your Kingdom come" falls trippingly from our lips.

But have you ever really thought you were praying for the actual end of the world order? Of YOUR life's order?

What would it look like? Where is it? Well. Let's look. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. Pretty ordinary. When I lived in the Richmond WW2 housing projects, we played with mustard plants. Actually it was one of the few weeds that would grow in the hardpack. Decorates mud pies well! Yes, I said weed. A noxious weed in many states. Why did Jesus like it? Well, because it IS a weed...it has tenacious roots, and it's invasive! A little s invasive! A little seed that does quite a bit. Anybody can grow it.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD is like yeast. Have you LOOKED at the internet? Everybody and her sister is posting how to leaven sourdough. Yeast is important. It grows. It multiplies the bread dough. The woman in the parable had enough bread for 100 to 150 people I read. Yeast is a little hard to control; even more so to transport. Jesus' listeners would know that it's not to be used on high Holy Days. It can even symbolize evil. Yeast is a bit subversive. A bit wild.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is like a dragnet. The fishermen cast their nets and they were filled to bursting. Including all manner of fish; I read there are 23 species in the Sea of Galilee, many of which these Jewish fisherman would find unclean! So much for the beautiful pastoral scene I had in mind. Commercial fishing is actually hard, messy work. The Kingdom of God is, according to Jesus, messy. Who is included in Heaven's Dragnet? What kind of people are inhabiting the Kingdom? All kinds. The lawful good, the rich, religious people and unbelievers, the undeserving poor, children, criminals, the police, the rioters. We will all be allowed to see God; we will all be caught up in the dragnet. The oppressor and the oppressed, the just and the unjust. You don't have to be a good girl or boy for God to love you. Anybody's welcome.

The Pearls...Jesus does talk about the enormous value of the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN... more valuable than anything we could own, or even work for. Yet when you see it, WOW! In the Bible the pearl represents perfection. It's a gem that does not need to be cut. Pearls remind me of weddings. Have you ever been to a wedding that wasn't PERFECT? Of course there were glitches, but weddings are like pearls. Unique and beautiful.

I'm a science fiction fan. One recurring theme is parallel universes. Stay with me here . I honestly believe that the Kingdom of God is like that. Jesus doesn't talk about exotic means to find the Kingdom. When and where? It is HERE and NOW; we have to look at it, participate in it. Jesus tells us in these parables that ordinary things can give us windows into God's Kingdom. Look out for them! Look into those windows of ordinary perfect things. They are everywhere. That the last shall be first. The captives set free. Beauty in the dirt.

So the Kingdom of heaven is an invasive, out of control, messy, perfect affair accessible to all who seek. Not at all what the younger me envisioned. Ordinary, maybe; or scary. Maybe; but a treasure worthy of your life. A new world order worth continually praying for: Thy Kingdom Come.
