
Sunday 26th July 2020 – The Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Readings: Romans 8:26-39 & Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Romans 8:26-39

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

‘For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord..

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.’

He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about thirty kilograms of flour until it worked all through the dough.'

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

'Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

'Have you understood all these things?' Jesus asked.

'Yes,' they replied.

He said to them, 'Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.'

Reflection

Isn't it funny how sometimes you think God might be speaking to you about something, and then you see it everywhere?

I've been thinking a lot throughout lockdown that one of the advantages of more time on our own, is that we have more time to pray. More time to deepen our individual relationships with Jesus without the noise of the crowd. We don't need to conform to the way that someone else likes to connect with God, or even a time which suits other people.

I was reminded today of a picture I had at the start of lockdown of a huge bush that needed digging up, but first I took cuttings and put them in a propagator. Now, the cuttings have roots. This time on their own, quietly being nourished has given them what they needed to grow stronger.

Then today while I was wasting some time on line (which could have been better spent a thousand ways) I read this; " Let the fire go out in the boiler room in church and the place will still look smart and clean, but it will be cold. The prayer room is the boiler room for its spiritual life". (Leonard Ravenhill.)

We have to pray. It keeps us healthy; it keeps us hoping, and it keeps us connected to God. It keeps the fire in our hearts growing! As we pray, we become more

aware of God's will, God's voice, God's love for us and God's purposes for us. We also become more like Jesus.

Then today I read this: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Rom 8:26). I was so encouraged! Because sometimes, it is much easier to pray for someone else than ourselves isn't it? But to know that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us is wonderful. It makes me feel more connected to God. Perhaps a bit stronger. It also reminded me that God knows me.

As I moved into the Mathew passages I was struck by the parable of the mustard seed. It dawned on me that the mustard seed is like prayer. We can pray tiny little prayers and amazing things can happen. But the thing about the mustard seed is, it must be planted before it will grow. Faith often requires action for it to flourish. Maybe you could spend some time with God today asking Him what He would like you to pray about, and then whatever idea stirs your soul, commit to praying about it and through it. Also perhaps ask God for the obedience required to do something about what you are praying for! A seed also requires us to be disciplined for it to grow. We need to give it water and get rid of the weeds and give it something to climb on sometimes. Our prayer life is like this too. We do need to be disciplined in creating and maintaining time alone to be with Jesus. To talk to Him and to listen to Him. But when we do, tiny little seeds of ideas or dreams can grow into huge bushes that provide safety and shelter for others.

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