

## 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time A: Kingdom of Heaven Starts in our Hearts (2020)

I remember the story of a little girl and a tourist. The little girl told the person who came to visit the church, she said, "Hey, mister, do you know I help build the church? The tourist smiled and responded, "really? It is good." "I help my mom bring lunch to my father, who worked in filing bricks when the walls of the church were built." That little girl was right; she did help build the church through her little way. Here at CCST, when we talk about the little way, it is the expression of our love—doing even the small acts with great love. Small but coming from a big heart.

We, the Church, pray with Jesus at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Our Father, holy be your name, may your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We pray for the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom is here in our hearts, where the reign of God rules.

Did you know? Our Lord Jesus himself embodies the Kingdom. He is the manifestation of the reign of God. He is the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Heaven proclaimed and lived out by our Lord Jesus starts with our encounter with Him through our conversion and through the Holy Spirit's workings. This is what St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans; he said, "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness — to support and strengthen us like scaffolding. The Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groaning — that is, this cannot be expressed in words. This must be a something, a potent source that causes genuine personal transformation. This reminds us that we must continually turn to the Holy Spirit to guide us in our daily lives as we try to live and allow God's reign in our lives.

Our Lord Jesus uses several parables to describe this Kingdom heaven. In our Gospel passage from Matthew, he compares it to a man who sows wheat in his field, but in the darkness of night, an enemy comes and sows weeds in the same field. Both weeds and wheat are permitted to grow, and only at the harvest time are they separated, or "judged" — the wheat gathered into the sower's barn and the weeds finally destroyed. So, it will be for each of us at the end of our time on earth. It is a sobering reminder of the justice of God. God will judge us for the part we played — or did not play — in His Kingdom's building.

All of us can tell that we are not perfect people; there are weeds and wheat inside us. Just as goodness and wickedness exist outside, they also reside inside of us. We commit a mistake and can hide them for a time. We sin and able to conceal them for a moment. And yet, God is patient, he gives us warning signs along the way, waking us up in the night of our souls. It is an important truth to remember that our God is good and forgiving. He gives a second chance. All of us, at some time or other, have desperately needed that second chance. The Book of Wisdom reminds us of God, who is mighty in power and yet also governs his people with his mercy. It proclaims, "Though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much leniency you govern us."

It is comforting that the mercy of God governs us. It gives us hope to renew ourselves to make our contribution to realizing the Kingdom of Heaven through our time, talent, and treasure. Our contribution may be small, but it is essential. This leads us to another truth of the Kingdom. In the following parables, Jesus compares the Kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed, "the smallest of all the seeds." But when it is fully grown, it becomes the largest of all the plants, a sturdy bush where "birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches." And he adds the third parable that Kingdom of heaven is like the small portion of yeast that is mixed in with flour for the making of bread. The yeast makes up a small amount of the ingredients, yet it is critical to the outcome. Without that tiny bit of yeast, the dough will not rise.

These two descriptions are especially encouraging to know and ponder. We often think that the prayers that we offer, the service we render, and the gifts we give, in comparison to the immense needs around us, can seem laughably small. But Jesus makes it clear through the images of yeast and the mustard seed, that is not the case!

God sees and treasures and "grows" our offerings of time, talent, and treasure in ways we cannot begin to imagine. It may be small, like a mustard seed, but the growth will be evident and beautiful. If we are but faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, the day will come when we "will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

With grateful hearts, let us remain faithful to the mission entrusted to our care for the building of the Kingdom of heaven. It starts here in our hearts. Then and only then, the petitions we pray in the Lord's Prayer are not petitions hanging on the air, but they are petitions that we are trying to accomplish in imitation of the little way of our patron saint, St. Theresa.

Pray and reflect:

"I understand, and I know from experience that: 'The kingdom of God is within you.' Jesus does not need books or teachers to instruct souls; He teaches without the noise of words. Never have I heard Him speak, but I feel that He is within me at each moment; He guides and inspires me with what I must say and do. I find just when I need them certain lights that I had not seen until then, and it isn't most frequently during my hours of prayer that these are most abundant but rather amid my daily occupations." — St. Therese of Lisieux

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe  
Pastor, CCST