

Sunday 26 July 2020 Seventh Sunday after Trinity

COLLECT Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

FIRST READING 1 Kings 3:5-12. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you."

PSALM 119:129-136 R Lord, how I love your law. Your decrees are wonderful; therefore I obey them with all my heart. When your word goes forth it gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. **R** I open my mouth and pant; I long for your commandments. Turn to me in mercy, as you always do to those who love your name. **R** Steady my footsteps in your word; let no iniquity have dominion over me. Rescue me from those who oppress me, and I will keep your commandments. **R** Let your countenance shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes. My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law. **R**

SECOND READING Romans 8:26-39. The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted 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, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

GOSPEL Matthew 13:31-33. 44-52. Jesus put before the crowd another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; 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." 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. 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. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and

caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." 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."

POST COMMUNION Lord God, whose Son is the true vine and the source of life, ever giving himself that the world may live: may we so receive within ourselves the power of his death and passion that, in his saving cup, we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Sunday Homily 26 JULY 2020 SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

"The kingdom of heaven is like..." Matthew 13:31

Many gardens are looking their best now, with flowerbeds in full bloom offering a magnificent profusion of colour, and vegetable gardens producing scrumptious, mouth-watering crops.

There are so many gardens to enjoy: our own (if we are keen gardeners) or, perhaps, our neighbours' (if we're not!). Then there are those truly wonderful gardens, some associated with grand houses, which deservedly draw in countless hosts of admiring visitors.

As we wander round our gardens, enjoying the rich colours and beautiful shapes and scents of flowers, or anticipating the tastes of newly cropped fruit and vegetables, perhaps questions – unspoken and marvelling – come into mind, questions like: "Does it really all begin with a small seed? How does anyone know what to sow, where, and when to sow it? Where does one start?"

Today's Gospel tells of Jesus "sowing seeds" – being a gardener, if you like. In nearly all his parables he "sows seeds", seeds of wisdom and encouragement, seeds of knowledge and confidence, which will grow in the hearts and minds of his listeners – among whom we, of course, number. They are seeds that if (when!) nurtured will flourish, and be fruitful.

Typically, he uses for his "seeds" everyday examples, things his listeners would recognise and know: the tiny seed which grows to become a strong bush; the single cell of yeast helping "flat" ingredients to become a wholesome loaf. He tells of folk who, in their everyday surroundings, spot real treasure (in the field and among the pearls), treasure which they value sufficiently to give up all else to gain. And to people with fisherman-neighbours, he spoke of a huge sea harvest, fish of every kind.

The "seeds" that Jesus is sowing here are seeds about the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is a challenging concept for many of us, but Jesus' words affirm how a smidgen of faith, a seed of love – our kingdom faith – if nurtured, will grow into something big and good. He shows that this kingdom faith is of great worth – "beyond price", one might say – something greatly to be desired, beyond our known measures of wealth. And the kingdom is all-embracing: there's a place – and room – for us all.

In recognising Jesus sowing "seeds" here it is important to note that, whilst he may well be looking ahead to the end product – the magnificently colourful flowerbed in full bloom, or the vegetable garden heaving with prize winning crops – he is in fact, in the parables of our Gospel today, focusing on the starting point: the tiny seed which grows to become a vibrant plant, the minuscule yeast cell which acts to produce a wholesome crunchy loaf.

Sometimes gardeners will start with a seed, and watch it become a lovely flourishing plant. Sometimes they will take a well-developed strong root clump, and divide it, each small part itself growing into a thriving plant.

Who first sowed a seed of faith in us? Did our faith come through what our family and friends shared with us and rooted in us? However we received it, and however small and frail it may sometimes seem, it has brought us into the kingdom.

If we take nothing else from today's Gospel reading we must recognise that the small seed of faith in us, that small cell of faith working in us and helping us to grow, the single jewel, the small but rich treasure, is our kingdom faith. As kingdom faith, its potential to grow and grow is unlimited. And grow it will, as we grow and grow in Jesus Christ, and so enhance the kingdom. The small seed of faith growing and working in us does indeed make us part of the kingdom – a great multiracial, multicultural, multi-generational harvest of all sizes and scents, of all colours and shapes.

The most basic of meals or the grandest of banquets is enriched by the inclusion of vegetables great or small. Our gardens and wayside hedgerows, flower arrangements at home (or in church), are all enriched by small flowers as well as large blooms, the hidden beauties as well as the bright colours.

So, too, is God's kingdom. You – we – are all part of the kingdom, God's kingdom.

Let's nurture this kingdom faith in us. Above all, let us sow and share the kingdom seeds with all around us, and so help God's kingdom flourish and grow. Let's do it – today