

The Sermon for July 26

**Finding Signs of the Kingdom of Heaven**  
**Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52**

**July 26, 2020**  
**All Saints Lutheran Church, Calgary**

The Text

[Jesus] put before them 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."

The Meditation

What is heaven like? The disciples wanted to know. They asked Jesus about this again and again. They really wanted to know. And Jesus really wanted them to know.

So, Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like.... A man who sowed some seed in a field...." (Slide of the **sower and the seed**)

But the disciples didn't get it. "What does that mean?"

Jesus tried again, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seeds in a field, but when they began to grow, there were **weeds in the field** too..."

The disciples responded, "Huh?"

Patiently, Jesus continued, “The kingdom of heaven is like a **mustard seed**... so tiny... but it grows to be so big, big as a tree, becoming a home for the birds!”

“And the kingdom of heaven is like **yeast**... just a little bit, mixed with water and flour, becomes a large fragrant, wonderful loaf of bread....”

Still the disciples looked puzzled.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a **treasure in a field**.... ..... A very beautiful, very expensive **pearl**..... A net **full of fish**, as many fish as there are nations in the world.....!”

But the disciples didn’t understand. They said, “I don’t get it.... The kingdom of heaven is like this... Or it’s like that... Or it’s like something else....”

“No, no no! You’re trying too hard. It’s not like this... **or** that.... **or** something over there... The kingdom of heaven is like this **and** that **and** the other... all of it.... **And more** than that!”

The disciples shook their heads.

One time, back in chapter 11 of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus was overheard to pray saying, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”

Jesus does want us to know what the kingdom of heaven is like. So, Jesus gives us sign after sign. But Jesus doesn’t want us to understand the kingdom of heaven... Jesus wants us to love it.

Jesus doesn’t want us to have everything figured out... then God is only what we have figured out! God is only what fits in our mental box. That’s not good enough! Jesus doesn’t want us to be theological professors who argue whether the kingdom of heaven is this, or that, or something else. Jesus wants us to be children who everyday find something more about what the kingdom of heaven is like. Jesus wants us to be like children who live to discover and live out and wonder, and who delight in the surprise of something new!

Jesus wants to play with us. And as we play, we grow, and our world, like the world of children, expands more and more. Like the kingdom of heaven.

So, I want to give you some homework. I want you today before bedtime – I want you to find forty-four signs of what the kingdom of heaven is like! Forty-four! Think you can do it? Let’s see... Let’s begin together with these....

The kingdom of heaven is like... slide of a **butterfly**

OK, if you have to think about it.... What do you see? It’s beautiful... delicate... almost magical. What was the butterfly’s life like before it became a butterfly? It was a bug, a caterpillar. It was slow and heavy and sometimes fuzzy and sometimes green and ugly. It could never get off the ground. But then God changed the bug into a butterfly. God knew the bug had a butterfly inside and God wrapped that bug in grace and let it sleep for a few days, and then God changed the bug into a butterfly and set it free. And

the whole world changed. And the whole world opened up. If you were a butterfly...free to go anywhere you wanted, where would you go first?

Let's try again... The kingdom of heaven is like... slide of a **child in a field of dandelions**....

And the kingdom of heaven is like.... **Children splashing at the beach**.... Sometimes the kingdom of heaven is noisy and wet and laughing....

AND sometimes the kingdom of heaven is like a **child reading a book**... It's quiet... it's alone time... it's imagination... it's adventure... it's learning....

AND sometimes the kingdom of heaven is like this! (slide of a **woman and a man** in what looks like a **nursing home**; they are looking out a window; and they are laughing) What do you see? Where are these two people? What are they doing? What do they see out the window? Why are they laughing? Who do you see is being helped, and who is the helper? Could it be the other way around?

The kingdom of heaven is like.... a **chocolate chip cookie**... Is there one chocolate chip or lots of chocolate chips? Why? Is it a small cookie or a big one? How come? Is it soft or crumbly; warm and gooey, or cool? Is it just for you, or is it big enough to share?

See, once you see with your eyes and your heart; once you see signs of the kingdom of heaven in a few places, you see signs everywhere. And once you see something *to be seen*... you see a story *to be lived*....

A few more.

The kingdom of heaven is like... a **grocery store clerk**.... Pretty important people these days, huh?

The kingdom of heaven is like... **children and parents playing**... what do you think is happening here? Sometimes people think the kingdom of heaven is boring; they think it's a lot of work. It's being kind... and generous. It's helping the poor and caring for the sick. It's feeding the hungry and visiting the shut-in. It's exhausting! It's this or that. But God wants to play too! After all, God made me and you... and monkeys and giraffes and penguins...

The kingdom of heaven is like... **teaching a child to ride a bike**....

The kingdom of heaven is like... a **homeless shelter**....

The kingdom of heaven is like... a **family of skunks**.... Skunks? Really? What do you see? These skunks are a family. You have a family. They are out exploring their world. You do that. They need something to eat and a place to sleep. So do you. Would you want this family of skunks living in your neighborhood, maybe under the house beside you? Let me ask you this: If this were a family of people... and they wanted to move into your neighborhood... but you said, "Nooooo! You're not welcome here!" Let me ask you, "Who would be a stinker then?"

The kingdom of heaven is like... the **city of Calgary**...

The kingdom of heaven is like... butterfly kisses... Do you know what butterfly kisses are? Butterfly kisses are when you get up close to someone you want to kiss, but you don't kiss with your lips... you flutter your eyelashes against their cheek. Try that with someone tonight before bedtime...

The kingdom of heaven is like.... Hey, that's our church! The kingdom of heaven is like the people of our church... And if I could have gotten a picture of all of your homes, I would have put them up too. The kingdom of heaven is where you live!

So, I gave you some homework. Before bedtime, find forty-four signs of the kingdom of heaven around where you live! Can you do it?

Someone once asked Jesus, "How many times do I have to forgive someone? As many as seven?" See this person wanted to know when he could stop forgiving and punch that person. Jesus said, "Uh uh. Not seven times, but seventy-seven times! But Jesus didn't mean we could punch somebody after forgiving them seventy-eight times. He was really saying, "The number doesn't matter. In fact, I hope you forget to count and have to start all over again... Instead, forgive as many times as you need to forgive."

In the same way, the number forty-four doesn't really matter. What matters is that you begin to look. And the more you look, the more you see.

And when we see the sign of the kingdom of heaven here...and there... and over there... pretty soon we see the kingdom of heaven everywhere!