

## Sunday Summary

**Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52**

Today's reading puts together a sequence of three parables of the kingdom that are found only in Matthew. All begin with the phrase "the kingdom of heaven is like..." but the meaning is more "it is the case with the kingdom of heaven as with..." Thus the focus of the comparison can be shifted from one particular item to the pattern of the whole story, especially its conclusion.

Matthew places these parables after Jesus has left the crowds and gone into the house (13:36); they are for the disciples' ears only. The parables of the treasure (which, because there were no banks, was probably someone's valuables buried to keep them safe and now forgotten) and of the pearl emphasize the cost of discipleship, the supreme value of the kingdom. The disciple may come upon the kingdom by chance or by diligent search, but in both cases, he recognizes its surpassing worth. One must give up "all that he has," relinquishing everything "in his joy."

The parable of the net, like the parable of the weeds, presents the picture of the Church as a mixed body. Verse 47 may have been in itself a parable of mission, stressing the universality of the call to the kingdom, fish "of every kind." The time of separation and judgment will come at the end.

## Weekly Reflection

Adult converts to Christianity can look back with wonder at the moment they realized the treasure God was offering them by inviting them into the kingdom.

But most of us know, too, that the choice was not and is not a once-and-forever choice. Most of us can also look back sadly on the betrayals, the compromises, and the apathy that took the place of our fervor as we strove to live our calling into the everyday circumstances of our lives. Diapers, debts and deadlines have a way of dulling the luster of every treasure, material or spiritual.

Nonetheless, we do not despair. God can transmute our very weaknesses into treasure by making them the occasion for the strength of grace to be shown more clearly. This is part of what Paul means when he teaches that all things work together for the good of those who love God. Our very sins can humble our hearts to enter more deeply into God's mercy and strength. If we let them, our sins can teach us all we need to know of the weakness of our brothers and sisters and the compassion of God.



### Food for Thought

❖ In Romans 8:26-39, Paul says that God will certainly provide all we need to fulfill God's plan of salvation for us. What else might we need God to give us?

### Food for Thought

❖ What contemporary images might we use to describe the immeasurable worth of the kingdom?

# Bridges for Bridges

## Recipe for Awareness

Begin with a moment of centering silence and quiet reflection, setting aside the concerns and agenda of the day.



**1 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our family.**

"Dear God, who is present with our family now, and at all times and in all ways..."

Continue with:

**2 We express our gratitude for today's gifts from God.**

"Today I give thanks for..." or,  
"Today, I am grateful for..."

Pause again for another moment of centering silence and quiet reflection.

**3 We come to an awareness of God's presence in our own experience.**

Silently contemplate the question:  
"When have I acted from love?"

Silently contemplate the question:  
"When have I acted from fear?"

Based on your contemplation, create your intention to move forward as an expression of God's Love.

**4 We plan and move forward with God.**

"God, help me to manifest your presence today by..."

## Invitations to Community

- Paul assures his listeners that all things work together for the good of God's people. How have we experienced God's goodness this year, especially in the midst of troubles? Praise God for his blessings, great and small.
- Jesus tells parables that call us to give all we have to enter into God's kingdom. What might God be calling us to sacrifice today for the sake of the kingdom? Pray that we may have wisdom and discernment to go whole-heartedly into the kingdom of God.

## Suggestions for Families

Make bread together. As you eat your finished loaf together, read aloud Matthew 13:33. Discuss: How is the kingdom of God like yeast? How is Jesus like the woman in this parable? How are we called to be like the woman in this parable?

Together with your whole family, plant a "tree of faith" (indoors or out) as a symbol how a little effort can start something that grows and grows, and as a reminder to all family members that faith practice is ongoing—it requires our attention and nurture. Continue to call to mind and enjoy this metaphor and recall the Parable of the Mustard Seed each time you notice or take time to care for this plant.

## Prayer Starter

God, give me a heart eager  
for your kingdom...

