

Well, I have to be honest with you all and start my sermon out today by saying the parables of Jesus describing the nature of God's kingdom are a little hard for me to understand. We are told that Jesus only spoke to the people in parables as they were able to hear it. But, he explained everything, privately, to the disciples.

And when I picture this scene I believe the reality was most of those people responded like my children when I give them life instructions. I admit more often than not I am guilty of talking too fast and not leaving room for interpretation when I speak to my sons. And when I finally take a breath and ask them well, do you understand they say "oh, yeh sure Mom" even though I know they stopped listening very shortly after I started talking!

Let me ask you all, in the year of our Lord 2021, who live in a western, rich, service oriented country where I think the majority of us do not know our mustard seeds from a whole in the ground, “have you understood this? Or maybe the question I need to ask is how do we understand the reign of God Jesus is describing in our own circumstances, in our everyday lives as he was encouraging the disciples to do so long ago?

The disciples had the Jewish background and context to understand what Jesus was saying. They were familiar with the Mustard plant which was considered a weed but they could “get” that the smallest of seeds they may have considered a weed could grow into a large, safe shelter for birds. Birds given shelter just like God can be our refuge. They also could understand a man cutting down his wheat at just the right time to harvest it.

So, Jesus is taking everyday life- the activities those people could really relate to and used them to illustrate the always present Kingdom (God's working in our lives) in new ways.

He simply describes what someone did and for me that is the key to understanding these ancient examples of God's kin-dom.

I believe Jesus is saying that everyone living spiritually with God in our hearts and minds is not always a passive endeavor. For example: taking other parables Jesus uses into consideration, He doesn't say the kingdom is like a pearl he says it's like a merchant IN SEARCH of a pearl. Living as God's kin is like a mustard seed that someone TOOK AND SOWED, like yeast that a woman TOOK and MIXED. It's like a treasure that someone found and HID and like a net that was THROWN. So the Kingdom of God is a verb as opposed to something inanimate or that you can put on a shelf.

I think what Jesus may want us to understand is that we are God's activity, dynamic, if you will, in this world. And it is in the ordinary-ness of life where we notice and manifest God's call.

In that case, Kingdom living is not something we only look forward to, a future event, it is here and now in someone planting a garden or cooking, or harvesting a wheat field to provide food, it is visible at our work place and it can be seen in our caring for creatures smaller than us.

So, Now I understand. It's all about our own life stories, our own experiences. The kingdom of God looks like people here, bringing in food for the food pantry to feed those who pass by on the street. The Kingdom of God is like all those in the Pastoral

Care ministries that write and send cards to cheer up or console a sister or brother in Christ.

It's like someone opening her home up so an interim rector who lives an hour and a half away can have a beautiful, comfortable place to stay with her dog.

The Kingdom of God is like Jesus turning the cross from a symbol of shame and defeat into a reminder of his victory over death and glorious resurrection and living God's desire for us is that moment when we all realize that NOTHING, no action we make can separate us from the love of God. OK, yeh sure now I get it, the kingdom of God is like right here and right now. What is it like for you? Amen.

Nicene Creed.