

Proper 12
Year A 2020
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Come Holy Spirit, give life to my words.

In the name of God, creator, redeemer and giver of life.

Amen.

Today we have 3 readings which seem to have very little connection to one another.

In fact, it took me some time to cull out a common theme.

Now, I'm sure the folks that put together the current lectionary cycle could point out many more and, to their credit, I'm sure there are more.

The common element I found was that God appears in today's readings as the giver of gifts.

In our first reading, God appears to Solomon in a dream and gives him a wise and discerning mind such as no other before or after Solomon had or ever would have.

In our second reading, Paul's letter to the Romans, we are reminded of the steadfast love of God given to us in the being of Jesus Christ.

And, in our third reading from the Gospel of Matthew, we hear a series of parables meant to assist us in discerning the many facets of the kingdom of God.

The gift of a life-giving tree
from the tiniest of seeds to shelter and feed.

The gift of the leavening agent which,
In even the tiniest amount, spreads throughout.

The hidden treasure buried in a field,
the great pearl,
and the net, which when employed,
can gather a multitude.

It struck me while I was working
with these passages of scripture that,
over the course of the last five months,
it hasn't much felt like a time
when we have been surrounded by gifts.

In fact, to me, it has felt much the opposite.

Much more akin to the wrath of God,
or God's judgment being loosed with a fury
I don't recall previously experiencing.

Now to be sure,
there have been times in my life
when there has been social upheaval,
the onset of new and unknown diseases which have caused death,
movements to address many offenses perpetrated
on nature and the environment.

But this, what we are currently experiencing, feels vastly different to me.

It feels as though all of creation
is crying out collectively for justice,
for accountability,
an end to all the ills that have brought us to this cliff edge.

I believe this really is a moment in time
when God is making known to us
the kingdom envisioned in Jesus Christ.

I think, I have had to grapple
with the fact that when I've been praying
all these years for the kingdom to come,
it certainly didn't look like this.

It was more roads paved of gold,
everybody happy, and all that kind of stuff.

But the reality for me
is that this is a moment when the kingdom
is breaking into the world in a fierce and judgmental way.

It is hard to look at the tally sheet
of the injustices and injuries
that have been carried out on all creation.

Changing decades upon decades of injustice,
hatred and ignorance just can't be pretty though can it?

It can't be accomplished by waltzing down a yellow brick road
without genuinely engaging in the work that needs to be done
to acknowledge the magnitude of sin in our world.

The injustice, the indifference, the privilege,
the ignorance, feigned or real.

So, having said all that, where is the good news?

Where in the world is today's and tomorrow's good news?

Because there has to be some.

We've been promised good news.

My brothers and sisters, it's right here.

In the words of commentator Michael Chan,
referring to the parables of
the buried treasure and the great pearl:

*The kingdom of God does not produce cowardice and retreat:
it electrifies people with abandon, courage, and joy.*

And how do we experience the kingdom of God?

Through the love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ.

And it is only when we lean into this love
that we will be able to engage in
the difficult work of bringing about the kingdom of God.

The *real* kingdom of God.

Built on the love that knows no injustice or prejudice,
allows no ignorance or hatred for all of creation.

And how can we be sure
that this love will carry us through
this arduous, but absolutely vital, journey?

Because we have been assured that
no hardship, distress, persecution,
nor things present,
nor things to come,
nor anything in all creation
will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.