

Homily

Matthew 13: 24-43

- Lets take a minute to play a game called “Fill in the Blank”. I’ll give you a sentence and you fill in the blank. Okay, here is the sentence: “ The Kingdom of heaven is like _____ ”
- Fill in the blank yourself. Use something that has tremendous value to you or brings you great joy.
- Here’s my short list. The Kingdom of Heaven is like: a seat on metro north during rush hour; or a NY Jet win; or an afternoon nap; or my wife’s lasagna; or a hug from my kids.
- I’m sure you came up with your own meaningful list. But why go through this exercise?
- The answer is to bring Jesus teaching on heaven alive and relatable in our life and times. Jesus did this. He taught in parables, meaningful stories and examples that hit home, made it real and relatable for the people of His day. The audiences of Jesus’ time were farmers and fisherman; so He spoke of seeds and weeds and pearls and fish. All to make his message relatable. Jesus makes comparisons between the Kingdom of Heaven, and things we humans value, to drive home the point there is nothing we should value more than being a citizen of God’s Kingdom.
- Last Sunday, today and next Sunday we read from Chapter 13 of St. Matthews Gospel. A chapter called “Parables of the Kingdom”.
- In this chapter Jesus talks to us about the “Kingdom of Heaven”; He describes what it is like and what it means to be a citizen of that kingdom.
- In today’s Gospel we learn some important things about this Kingdom via three parables.
- In the parable of the mustard seed we learn the Kingdom of Heaven is open to all. Jesus speaks of a huge bush growing from a tiny mustard seed. A bush where all birds are welcomed to come to live. Jesus point? God’s kingdom has room for everyone, everyone is invited and everyone is important. No one is too small and no one is insignificant. Remember that the next time you are down on yourself.
- In the parable of the yeast mixed into flour, we learn the Kingdom of God is meant to grow (as yeast causes flour to expand and rise). Think about it, Jesus initiated the Kingdom in an obscure corner of

the world, among a little known group of people, at a time in history when global communication was non-existent. But look what happened – look at the wonders of God’s work! What seemed small and insignificant (like a tiny mustard seed or pinch of yeast) grew into worldwide Christianity!!!

- And in the parable of “the wheat and the weeds” we learn the Kingdom of God begins right here and now in this life. It will have its share of problems but will be perfected one day. And it is this parable of weeds and wheat I would like to focus on.
- If everyone is invited to be citizens of the Kingdom and there is plenty of room – what’s the problem? Actually there are two – the existence of evil in this world combined with our own “free will”.
- In last week’s Gospel we heard Jesus describe the different “free will” responses people have toward God’s invitation to the kingdom.
- Some hear the invitation but don’t understand. Maybe their hearts have grown dull, lazy. Maybe they have closed their eyes and minds. Whatever the reason they just don’t bother.
- Some understand the invitation but cannot stand up to the challenges and choices required to live in God’s Kingdom. Sometimes God asks us to make big changes, move out of our comfort zone – these things take faith and trust and some are not willing to put in the effort.
- Some hear the invitation but are distracted by worldly things that compete for our attention: possessions, careers, fame, etc....
- But some hear the invitation to the Kingdom, understand the tremendous treasure being offered to them and take the critical steps of opening their heart to Jesus, putting on Jesus’ attitude and living out His teachings.
- The response we choose determines whether we become weeds or wheat. If we choose “weed” we are not only rejecting God’s love and invitation to the Kingdom; we choose to work at “choking off” the growth of those around us. Jesus warns the punishment for this choice is severe – still it is our choice to make.
- Truth be told most of us are still working this out. Occasionally slipping when fears or outside pressure gets the best of us. But we can grow to be wheat. How?
- By living life a certain way. Jesus boiled it down to two things: Love God and love each other. Last week’s Gospel described us as

seeds. Seeds are planted somewhere. They grow. They flower and bring beauty to the place they are. Or they become food and nourishment for others. We are expected to do the same. To help others; pray for them; listen to them – whatever it takes to be God’s love for them.

- And if we ever think we are not strong enough to live this way. We are right – somewhat.
- None of us are strong enough on our own, but we are not alone. Not alone in our efforts to grow in holiness and become members of the Kingdom of God. We have a strong ally, the Holy Spirit. As our second reading from St. Paul reminds us: *“The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.”*
- The Spirit groans in us, desires so strongly for us to become members of God’s Kingdom now and forever. We just need to set that spirit free to work in us. When we do, we grow strong. We become the wheat God intended despite the weeds that might surround us.