

## Sermon for Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Brian Jones

Matthew 13:31 – 33,44 – 52 Romans 8: 26 – 39

Last Sunday Andrea in her sermon talked about hope; the hope or expectation of Christmas presents which sometimes are disappointing but more importantly about the sure hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ when we will see God face to face. However, to have such a hope what do we have to have to do? Any suggestions? I think I can hear faith, love your neighbour, prayer, relationship with God, living by Gods Commandments and following Jesus' teachings, the list is in my experience endless but for me it is best summed up as a whole way of life with God through Jesus Christ here on earth till the day we enter eternal life with God.

So where does the Gospel Reading from Matthew fit into this picture? The parable of the mustard seed appears in Mark and Luke's Gospels and it is one we have all heard or read many times. Firstly though, what is a parable? Put simply it is a story which is used to illustrate a theme but with two views or aspects. Secondly why a mustard seed? Jesus often used examples from nature, which the ordinary person at that time would understand, in a lot of his teachings. They would have known that the tiny mustard seed grew into a tree about 15 feet high or thick bushes spread over a large area. They would have known that mustard was used not only as a flavouring but also as a medicine to treat sinus problems and breathing problems and as a balm to draw out infections from wounds because of the heat from the mustard, uses which still continue today.

In this parable Jesus is telling the people how a tiny seed can grow into a large tree in which the birds of the air can nest. Jesus is naturally talking about the Church and its growth from very small beginnings, just like the mustard seed, into something very big. I suspect the ordinary people did not understand this straight off. We are told though Jesus did explain this parable and the others in the Gospels to the disciples VERSES 44 TO 47 HE LIKENS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN TO TREASURE HIDDEN IN THE FIELD AND A MERCHANT SEEKING FINE PEARLS AND FISH CAUGHT IN A NET.’ All things to seek and seeking the Christian life is what you and I have to do. Jesus then asks his disciples if they understand what this means in verse 51, to which they reply they do. They understand that Jesus is talking about the establishment of the Church on earth. The treasure in the field for me is that tiny seed of faith which will grow and grow the Church here on earth as more people come to God. The pearls for me are the wisdom and guidance of God revealed to me as my relationship grows with him and the fish are the people introduced to God through my deeds and ministry. This is personal but I feel it is important to understand by practical examples what this and the other parables mean.

So, what do the disciples have to do? It will be their role to take the small beginnings and grow the Church, like the mustard seed, into a large tree in which many can gather and believe; this is a Church of true believers not some large monolithic organisation or structure which can and has through the ages lost sight of God at its centre, a trap which we human beings so easily slip into when we start saying they have always been done that way in the Church or we feel comfortable so we don't want change. I don't believe Jesus meant this; we all have to continue to grow in our relationship with God through the teachings of his Son Jesus Christ and grow His Church by introducing people to

Him through our actions and words and lifestyle. A Church which does not change and grow will not flourish.

What happens if we don't do this or lose sight of God and Jesus? Well the reading comes with what we would now describe as a 'health warning.' Look at verse 40 '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.' I know where I want to be but I also know I can't stop and sit back. I have to strive in my daily life through prayer, study and lifestyle so that one day I will meet my God in Heaven. So, like the mustard seed keep on growing in faith. I'LL FINISH WITH SOME WORDS OF JOY FROM PSALM 126 'THOSE WHO GO OUT WEeping CARRYING SEED TO SOW WILL RETURN WITH SONGS OF JOY CARRYING SHEAVES WITH THEM.' It won't be easy, it was never meant to be, but trust in the Lord and you will come through rejoicing.

Let us pray. Help us in our weakness, Spirit of God, grant us honesty in our prayers and in our failures in prayer and shape us through rough and smooth more and more into the image of Christ. Amen