



SUNDAY 16 JULY 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Fifteenth Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 13:1-23

We were brought up on stories. Family stories, wartime stories, funny and tragic stories, but our histories are wrapped in the tales handed on to us.

We don't talk like Government or business reports, heavy with statistics, analysis and forecasts. We talk about Debbie and Jack Public, what they looked like, what they did and said and what happened after. But things don't end there. The stories change. Bits get left out and other bits are exaggerated. We don't reliably hand on what actually happened, but we focus on what it meant to us and describe it in our way.

Jesus' stories are brilliant - just try and craft one as good. My teacher pals sweat over lesson plans. The Lord's parables betray careful planning and delivery. We don't have his stories first hand. They come to us through the versions that stuck in the memories of those who heard and how they repeated them. The 40-odd parables we still have are a penetrating insight into a brilliant teacher. We're still talking about him.

But it's what he taught that's the point. His style is to be admired and copied, but the stories were and are vehicles carrying a way of seeing that we're asked to take on. For want of a soundbite, Jesus called it 'Kingdom'. It's a different place to live.

Today's Gospel story of the Sower is a classic. Jesus is the Sower. His stories are the seeds he sows and the various results of where the stories land and what we do with them become an unflattering daily portrait of you and me.

The stories are seeds. The pictures memorable. They sit inside us and can germinate - or wait their time - or not, as the case may be. The amazing Sower doesn't stop putting the seeds out there - indiscriminately, even knowing how well or minimally they'll be received. He has no illusions about us, but has an astonishing belief in the enduring power of his words and the niggling potential of what they can do to us.

This Gospel story is about us, distracted and yet achievers both on bright summer's days and wet winter Fridays. Kingdom thinking is about how we love in an intolerant and selfish world. It's about care of the earth and of each other. It's from a God who never stops believing in us. Hear the story and tell it to yourself and others. It's a good day when we get the message.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on talking about truth

Is it possible to be concerned for truth, to seek the truth that responds to life's deepest meaning? What is law without the conviction, born of age-old reflection and great wisdom, that each human being is sacred and inviolable? If society is to have a future, it must respect the truth of our human dignity and submit to that truth. Murder is not wrong simply because it is socially unacceptable and punished by law, but because of a deeper conviction. This is a non-negotiable truth attained by the use of reason and accepted in conscience. A society is noble and decent not least for its support of the pursuit of truth and its adherence to the most basic of truths.

We need to learn how to unmask the various ways that the truth is manipulated, distorted and concealed in public and private discourse. What we call 'truth' is not only the reporting of facts and events, such as we find in the daily papers. It is primarily the search for the solid foundations sustaining our decisions and our laws. This calls for acknowledging that the human mind is capable of transcending immediate concerns and grasping truths that are unchanging, as true now as in the past. As it peers into human nature, reason discovers universal values derived from that same nature.

- ***Fratelli tutti paras 207-8***