



SUNDAY 19 JULY 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Sixteenth Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 13:24-43

Mac lives in the next street. He's very definite. Issues are either black or white. He doesn't do grey, has little patience with subtleties and nuance confuses him. He's in-your-face clear and very judgemental.

Freedom is beyond price. We fight for it and defend it. We're privileged to live in part of the world where, within parameters of justice and peace, freedom is acknowledged if not always appreciated. Someone else's exercise of their freedom may not equate with yours or mine.

Jesus the storyteller gave many pictures about the kingdom of heaven - what living in God's way is like. Matthew the Gospel writer gathers a number of them together in chapter 13 of his Gospel. One illustration doesn't do it all. Jesus piled image upon image, early multimedia savvy.

One of the Kingdom images in today's Gospel passage describes good seed - that's you and I, the subjects of the Kingdom - growing up in a world also inhabited by others with bad and self-serving intentions and projects. Our God gives freedom for the good and bad to both flourish. Kingdom thinking and behaviour has to contend with a world where alternative lifestyles and pressures live side by side. A world we all recognise, where cruelty and disregard for others are all too evident. Being a disciple of the Kingdom is a serious business.

Jesus' parables are windows into the Kingdom. He adds stories about mustard seeds and yeast. The Kingdom is about life and growth. Complacency is not compatible with flourishing. We are honed and shaped by what we take on. Our capacity to work for the common good is also our ability to teach. Our modelling of Kingdom values can change others. Jesus' story of the wheat allows time before the harvest. Time for conversion. To help teach others. To effect change. Condemnation can be simplistic if not accompanied by demonstrating more life-giving alternatives.

We all like stories. Jesus realises only too well that we often leave them as that - just stories. But they're dynamite. We're meant to engage with these pictures and wrestle with them so that, like the privileged apostles, the message becomes clearer to us. These images are about us. How much do you want to learn? Let Jesus teach us. Thanks.



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And this is Pope Francis again, drawing out Gospel teaching for our world

A financial reform open to ethical consideration would require a vigorous change of approach on the part political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and an eye to the future, while not ignoring, of course, the specifics of each case. Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind all that the rich must help, respect and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favours human beings.

Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society - whether local, national or global - is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquillity. This is not the case simply because inequality provokes a violent reaction from those excluded from the system, but because the socioeconomic system is unjust at its roots. Just as goodness tends to spread, the toleration of evil, which is injustice, tends to expand its baneful influence and quietly to undermine any political and social system, no matter how solid it may appear. If every action has its consequences, an evil embedded in the structures of a society has a constant potential for disintegration and death. It is evil crystallized in unjust social structures, which cannot be the basis of hope for a better future. We are far from the so-called "end of history", since the conditions for a sustainable and peaceful development have not yet been adequately articulated and realised. (*Paragraphs 58 and 59 from 'The Joy of the Gospel'*)