

Sermon July 26, 2026

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Jesus put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. 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.

'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

Fourteen Years

For 14 long years Jacob worked for Laban. For 14 long years, Jacob waited for the freedom to take his beloved Rachel and go back home. I wonder what he thought on the last day of the 14th year. As he looked back to his time in Laban's household, did he see memories to treasure or just time spent to reach his ultimate goal. We heard today that he was filled with joy for those first 7 years, as he prepared to be with Rachel. He sang over his food, danced while he worked... all for his beloved Rachel. But what about that last 7 years, as he looked at his father-in-law with resentment. Did he still sing and dance with joy? Did he see God's presence in his day-to-day life?

In those years with both Leah and Rachel, Jacob became a father several times. His family grew; his wealth grew. Did he see the blessings of his life, or did he just take them for granted.

A lot can happen in fourteen years. It can feel like a lifetime. For our little ones, it's more than a lifetime.

What were you doing fourteen years ago? Barack Obama was President, 17 year old Trayvon Martin was fatally shot in Florida, sparking national debates on race and self-defense laws. Whitney Houston died and Beyonce had her first child.

Public opinion about many social issues have changed in the past fourteen years. Washington State and Colorado became the first states to legalize marijuana for recreational use; marriage equality was on the ballot in Maryland. Black lives Matter, Covid, President Trump – all of this were foreign concepts to us 14 years ago. We never dreamed what lay ahead.

In the past 14 years, my daughter has grown from a middle school student, full of pre-teen age angst and attitude, to a newlywed, ready to change the world. These past fourteen years are overflowing with memories that I will

always treasure. And I know the past fourteen years are filled with special treasures for each of you too.

Yes, a lot has happened – some good, some really bad... all of it life changing. Too often we focus on the big events swirling around us and miss all the memories built by our families, right before our eyes.

Jesus reminds us that the God's Place is not found in the big events but is found all around us -- in the little things we encounter all along the way. Jacob worked for 14 years, but signs of God's presence were all around him – in the food and sunshine, in his son's first word and his daughter's first step, in the lost sheep returned to the sheepfold. How much of that did he carry with him?

What is the Kingdom of God like? Jesus said it's just like those little things. God's Kingdom, the Beloved community, is like a teeny-tiny mustard seed. All by itself, it is easily overlooked. But, plant it and make sure it has sun and water and good soil, and soon you will have a sanctuary that provides protection to small animals and a home to the birds of the sky.

God's Realm is like a grain of yeast. By itself, it is nothing, but add it to flour and water and bake it, and you have a golden loaf of bread. Food that nourishes the body... and as we break that bread we remember Jesus.

God's Beloved Community is like a little pearl. Beautiful by itself, but even better when it is linked with other pearls. Just as God's Community is better when each of us are linked together by our faith.

The Kingdom of God is like all of these little things. They can become greater things, but you need to value that first, small ingredient. And you need to be willing to help it grow into something more.

What is God's Beloved Community like? Jesus tells us that it is also like treasure hidden and forgotten. But when that lost treasure is discovered in

the most unlikely place, it brings such joy. We celebrate in our new found wealth -- we sing and dance over it!

Or God's Realm is like an empty fishing net, worthless unless you plunge it deep into the water. As you pull it up, filled with fish, you rejoice in the abundance. And you cannot help but remember Jesus' words to the disciples, sending them out to fish for people. God's Kingdom is filled with all the people we catch, and they are worth more than all the treasures and all the pearls in the world!

God's Holy Community is like all of these things. God's Holy Community made up of all of the small things that the rest of the world passes by, but those small things help create that which is the most valuable.

God's Beloved Community is just like us. We are small. We are easily overlooked by the rest of the world. But we are vital to God's vision of a Beloved Community.

Trinity, we have a special place in God's plan! Our legacy extends back... not just 14 years but extending back through the stories of those who came before us. People of faith who made it possible for us to gather here today.

When we look back in 14 years, what will we see? Will we have notice those little things and seen ways to grow them into something bigger, beautiful and essential to our lives? Or will we stumble along and miss out on opportunities because we lose sight of why God put us here? The rest is really up to us in this place called Trinity. God's gifts are unexpected, but they do require a response. We need to be willing to open the treasure box when we find it; we need to be ready to drop our nets in the water of life

Let us put our trust in God. The God that uses what others think is unusable. The God that calls us to respond to others with extravagant love. The God that sees in us what others cannot see. By living this way, we become a part of the Kingdom of God... God's Beloved Community. Praise be to God. Amen