

## Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

“The stories tell it all”



By now, Jesus was drawing large crowds, wherever he went, whenever he spoke. One day, by the side of the lake, the crowd grew so large that Jesus got into a boat, sat in it, just a little off shore, and taught.

He began to teach the people about the kingdom of God. Knowing how much truth can be conveyed in a simple story, Jesus told about the kingdom through stories. Some of them began, “Once there was ...”, while others drew the people’s attention with “The kingdom of heaven is like ...”

Jesus told about a farmer who sowed seed in his fields. He scattered the seed into every part of his field. Some of the seed was eaten by the birds; some of it fell on rocky ground, where it began to grow, but soon was burned up by the sun. Some fell amongst the thorns which choked the young plants off. And some fell in the good soil and bore a fine harvest.

The disciples and the crowd listened, but they didn’t understand. What had the kingdom of heaven to do with a farmer, sowing a field? Jesus explained it to them, but they were still unsure.

So, Jesus told them another parable, another story, about another man with seed and a good field. The man planted the best seed, anticipating a clean and bountiful crop. However, somehow an enemy managed to sow weeds amongst the good seed. The grain had barely begun to grow when the weeds appeared. The man’s servants were confused; the farmer, suspicious. Now, what were they to do? The farmer decided to leave the weeds and grain to grow together, until the day of harvest. Then the weeds would be gathered first, coiled together and burned. Afterwards, the grain would be harvested and the produce of the good seed would be unharmed.

When the story had been told, the crowd looked all the more confused. Later, Jesus explained it to the disciples. The sower is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed is the people who belong to the kingdom. The weeds belong to the evil one. And the enemy is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age. The servants are the angels. “At the end of the age, the Son of Man will send out his angels to gather up out of his Kingdom, all those who cause people to sin and all others who do evil things, and they will be thrown into the fiery furnace where they will cry and gnash their teeth. Then, God’s people will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom.”

There are other stories too – many, many more – about the kingdom. Jesus likened the kingdom to a grain of a mustard seed, that when sown in a field, although the smallest seed on earth, grows into the biggest of all plants. He gave examples of how yeast changes flour into raised dough; and of the hidden treasure that a man found in a field one night and sold everything because only this treasure counted in his life; and of a pearl that was uniquely precious and how it became the only thing worth having; and of a net used in fishing, that caught all fish that would then be sorted with only the good ones kept.

Over many weeks and months, Jesus told dozens of stories. There was the man who threw a great party and invited all the folks around only to discover that everyone was too busy

to bother coming, and who then brought in all the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame because they were willing and hungry to come. There was the farmer with 100 sheep, one of which was lost... and the woman who lost one coin who searched high and low ... and the son who demanded his inheritance, wasted all of it, and came home to discover a father who loved and longed after him. There was the Samaritan who took compassion on a beaten and bleeding man after others had passed by that man.

The stories are almost limitless. It was almost as though Jesus was intent on getting people to understand that the kingdom and entry into that kingdom was different than what they had been taught by the Pharisees, different that they could possibly imagine. It was as though Jesus was intent on getting people to hunger, to yearn for that kingdom, so that they would enter into it one day.