

The Reverend Marjo Anderson

**Reading for Revised Common Lectionary –Pentecost 8
Matthew 13.31-33, 44-46, 51-52**

**26 July 2020
Salem, Bridgeport**

“I Found the Treasure!!!”

How many of you remember Robin Williams in the show Mork and Mindy?

In the series, Mork, an alien from the planet Ork, had been sent to study and report on human behavior.

I don't think I watched it regularly,

but I will never forget an episode in which there was some sort of nuclear disaster.

Mindy, his young journalist friend, beside herself with worry, but Mark couldn't understand her concern.

All you had to do was clean it up with a little “Nuke-away” and all would be well, right?

When Mindy explained that we didn't have anything like Nuke-away on earth, Mork was completely baffled.

Why would any rational society mess with something as dangerous as nuclear power

if they didn't have a way to clean it up?

Until that moment our society's use of nuclear power had seemed perfectly ordinary, acceptable, normal to me.

But the way Mork re-framed the issue under the disguise of humor that day completely changed how I saw it.

I share that story to illustrate the fact that Jesus was that kind of comedian.

Now it may be hard for us to wrap our minds around that concept,

not only because we just read the dry words in a familiar book

and don't hear the expression in his voice or see the smile on his face or the twinkle in his eye.

but we also don't understand the society or culture or context in which he spoke.

But Jesus was much more like a comedian than a preacher or teacher or author.

He didn't write books, or treatises, or theological expositions.

He didn't appeal to people's intellect, or the logical side of their brains.

He appealed to their imagination and senses.

He told stories, some fairly long and involved,

and he also spoke in parables, which were often no more than a sentence.

And in his parables Jesus did what comedians do:

take something ordinary, something we take for granted,

something we accept as normal, as part of our world view,

and turn it upside down or inside out to make it suddenly seem absurd.

“The kingdom of heaven is like...”

Now first of all, Jesus was NOT talking about heaven, as in where we go after we die.

On the contrary, Jesus wanted us to know that the kingdom of heaven can be found here and now in this life!

But where is it? Where do we find it? What does it look like?

Most people would have expected Jesus to compare the kingdom of heaven

to something fine and grand and awesome.

That's what we do when we want to promote something, right?

We want to define our country or our church or our school as something great and wonderful.

So surely the kingdom of heaven must be like a giant sequoia, or a rare vintage of fine wine?!

But like a comedian, Jesus says *the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed!*

A mustard seed? Really?!

First of all it's not the smallest seed and it doesn't grow into a large tree

and its branches are too delicate to support the weight of most birds,

so none of this is meant to be logical or scientific.

It's just meant to surprise us, and make us smile, and change forever how we look at God's kingdom.

Jesus says *the kingdom of heaven is like a pinch of yeast!*

Yeast? Really?!

Yeast was not considered a pure thing back then –

it was considered rotten and rancid and normally used to describe something unholy and disgusting.

It was certainly not what people were expecting Jesus to use to image heaven on earth!

Again, Jesus just meant to surprise us & make us smile & change forever how we look at God's kingdom.

What Jesus was saying is that the kingdom isn't found where we expect it,

it doesn't look like we imagined it,

and it doesn't fit into our preconceived ideas about it.

Whenever and wherever we discover it, it will usually take us by surprise.

*The kingdom of heaven is like discovering a treasure or a pearl of such great worth
that one is willing to give up EVERYTHING else in order to have it!*

Again if we try to read the parables like prose, or like logical examples from a lecture, they unravel.

But the point of the parables is not to give us a video of the whole story,

but simply to give us a snapshot of what the kingdom is like.

And here Jesus is saying that when we discover the kingdom of heaven,

there will be surprise and delight and excitement and joy,

for we will have found something that is so amazing that it's worth giving up everything else we have.

That's the treasure that God is holding out for you and for me!

Eckhart Tolle tells it like this:

"A beggar had been sitting by the side of a road for over thirty years. One day a stranger walked by.

'Spare some change?' mumbled the beggar, mechanically holding out his old baseball cap.

'I have nothing to give you', said the stranger. Then he asked: 'What's that you are sitting on?'

'Nothing', replied the beggar. 'Just an old box. have been sitting on it for as long as I can remember.'

'Ever looked inside?' asked the stranger.

'No', said the beggar. 'What's the point? There's nothing in there.'

'Have a look inside', insisted the stranger. The beggar managed to pry open the lid.

With astonishment, disbelief, and elation, he saw that the box was filled with gold.

I am that stranger who has nothing to give you and who is telling you to look inside.

Not inside any box, as in the parable, but somewhere even closer: inside yourself."

[The Power of Now, pp. 11-12, Kindle edition]

Jesus says that we are sitting on the box. Maybe we've looked inside and maybe we haven't.

If we are still looking for scraps of pleasure or fulfillment, for validation, security, or love,

if we are still waiting for something better than what we have, than perhaps we need to look inside the box.

Or maybe we have looked inside and found our true wealth,

which is the radiant joy of Being and the deep, unshakable peace that comes with it.

If we've looked in the box and discovered the treasure, then no matter what is going on in life situation,

we won't be able to keep that joy inside.

Even when everything around us seems to be falling apart,

our joy is going to continue to bubble up and overflow and we simply won't be able to keep it to ourselves.

It will be obvious in the smile on our face, the sparkle in our eyes, and the excitement in our voice.

The church is not the treasure. The church is the box that holds it.

We are not the treasure, but we are the box that holds it.

Each day of our lives is a treasure hunt –

as we daily discover the ever new riches that God offers us in Jesus through the power of the Spirit.

I pray that this week you would experience the adventure and excitement of finding that which you seek –

the radiant joy of Being, and the deep, unshakeable peace that comes with it.

Find the treasure – give thanks – and share your joy with everyone you meet! **Amen**