



Alstonville Anglicans

Sunday 6th August 2023

Welcome



Sharing the Good Life

We acknowledge the Bundjalung people, traditional custodians of the Land.

Our doors are open: LGBTQIA+ welcome here.

Streaming licence: CCLI 102220

Alstonville Anglicans are committed to ensuring that all people who participate in our worship, programs and ministries have a safe and rewarding experience.

Tel: 66280231 www.anglicans.live

Bank account: BSB 705 077 / Acc:00032931

6th August – 13th August

6 th August		Sunday Holy Communion
7 th August	9am	
	9am-12pm	Monday Parish Office
	9.00am-2.30pm	EAC Retreat onsite Alstonville
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	10am	Anam Cara
	10am	Deadline for bulletin items
	11am	CoVe Meeting
	1pm	Sew Helpful / Knitted
	3.30pm	Knockers
	6pm	Op Shop Meeting Spirit Ability
8 th August		Tuesday
	7.30am-9am	Birthday B'fast Ladies Options, Men's B'fast 86 on Main
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Closed
	10am	Alstonville Justice Meeting
9 th August		Wednesday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am	Anam Cara
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
10 th August		Thursday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	9.30am	Play Place
	11.20am	Cards & Cuppa EAC
	6pm	Anam Cara
11 th August		Friday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	10am	Holy Communion
12 th August		Saturday
13 th August		Sunday
	9am	Holy Communion

This bulletin contains current announcements and the week's calendar and the sermon notes from the previous Sunday. Use our welcome booklet for info and contact details for regular activities. Keep it as a reference tool. We welcome any feedback on the booklet.../..../welcomeBooklet_v3.pdf



Spirit Ability

Spirit Ability is a fellowship group for Christians living with a disability.

Monday 7th August 6-8pm
The evening will include a meal & sharing time.



Play Place continues to serve the community by providing a safe place for toddlers and their carers to meet and enjoy the company of like minded people. One new problem that a couple of mothers have suffered is children complaining that they talk to the other mothers and don't keep playing with them. Most of you will know how difficult it is to get personal time when you have a toddler. We know that the mums need time to talk to each other.

We have a great team of workers. Some are able to come more often than others and that's fine. New volunteers are always welcome in whatever capacity they can help. At the moment we have a need for someone, or a couple, who are willing to do morning tea once or twice a term.

Sermon on Friday 28th July by Reverend Doug Bannerman

The great physicist Niels Bohr (1885–1962) used to say to his students, 'Every sentence that I utter should be regarded by you not as an assertion but as a question.' That is, every assertion is a question in disguise.

One ongoing question with regard to parables is, 'Are the parables stories of the kingdom (eschatological) or fables of human existence (existential)?' Or both? Most parables of Jesus have antecedents in folk lore, and much of the same material is discussed in the Rabbinic and historical literatures of the time.

The way you or I interpret a given parable is coloured by our respective social and cultural backgrounds, in essence, by what you or I want as a take away package.

'Do you understand?' says Jesus. 'Ooh yes!' comes the reply. But do they understand what Jesus wished *them* to understand? Jesus' response is a thinly disguised question. 'Every scribe learned in the reign of God knows how to bring forth out of his treasures new things and old.'

As we know, some folk are very good at producing new things and ideas with little reference to tradition; and some can churn out old stuff which may be quite sterile to the modern ear. Neither are teachers that Jesus considers fit for the reign of God.

Pope John Paul XXIII had the remarkable ability to maintain fidelity to the old together with openness to the new. The new signs of the times he recommended to the Vatican council were just as much a revelation of God as things long since past.

He demonstrated that a full Christian life must be grounded in a *living* tradition. That is to say, the church must constantly integrate into the Gospel new information, new wisdom, if she is to communicate effectively with contemporary society.

Sadly, many churches identify God's values with particular structures or symbols, and if anything new or different is introduced that church erupts, thinking its cherished gospel values have been snubbed or rejected. Sometimes, ancient symbols can prevent the value of the Gospel being fully transmitted in new circumstances.

Jesus followed freely the traditions of Moses and the Prophets; but, on the other hand, he paid no attention to the rabbinical practices of preaching only in synagogues and only with regard to scripture. It is vital for the survival of the Church to grow beyond over-identification with its current symbolisms.

Thomas Keating remarked that 'It is precisely the *intentionality of love* that goes beyond human rules, customs and mindsets' that enable the church to present gospel in such a way that it will be heard in the here and now.¹

The reign of God involves a social dimension, not just the sifting of our own motivations. It involves being able to sort the wheat from the chaff in both the old and the new, in both tradition and innovation.

This principle applies equally well to modern symbols of civilisation like the constitution. Are we really content with a constitution forged in a society that regarded First Nation Peoples as sub-human? Perish the thought. Change in that respect is urgently needed if our democracy is to be an instrument of integrity to human values.

Herewith a relatively new tale that comprehensively illustrates what I am getting at.

Rabbi Bunam used to tell young men who came to him for the first time the story of Rabbi Eisik, son of Rabbi Yekel in Cracow.²

After many years of great poverty, which had never shaken his faith in God, he dreamed someone bade him look for a treasure in Prague, under the bridge that leads to the king's palace. When the dream recurred a third time, Rabbi Eisik prepared for the journey and set out for Prague. But the bridge was guarded day and night and he did not dare to start digging. Nevertheless, he went to the bridge every morning and kept walking around it until evening. Finally, the captain of the guards, who had been watching him, asked in a kindly way whether he was looking for something or

¹ Thomas Keating *Meditations on the Parables of Jesus* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company 2021) p61

² Martin Buber *Tales of the Hasidism: The Later Masters* (New York: Schocken Books 1975) pp. 245-246

waiting for somebody. Rabbi Eisik told him of the dream that had brought him here from a faraway country.

The captain laughed: "And so to please the dream, you poor fellow, you wore out your shoes to come here! As for having faith in dreams, if I had had it, I should have had to get going when a dream once told me to go to Cracow and dig for treasure under the stove in the room of a Jew – Eisik, son of Yekel, that was the name! Eisik, son of Yekel! I can just imagine what it would be like, how I should have to try every house over there, where one half of the Jews are named Eisik, and the other Yekel!" And he laughed again.

Rabbi Eisik bowed, travelled home, dug up the treasure from under the stove, and built the House of Prayer, which is called "Reb Eisik's Schul."

The Ethologist, Heinrich Zimmer, remarked about this story:

Thus, the real treasure, ... is never very far; there is no need to seek it in a distant country. It lies in the most intimate parts of our own house; that is, of our own being. It is behind the stove, the centre of the life and warmth that rule our existence, the heart of our heart, if only we know how to unearth it. And yet – there is this strange and persistent fact, that it is only after a pious journey in a distant region, in a new land, that the meaning of that inner voice guiding us on our search can make itself understood by us. And to this strange and persistent fact is added another: that he who reveals to us the meaning of our mysterious inward pilgrimage must himself be a stranger, of another belief and another race.³

This, wrote Mercea Eliade, is the profound meaning of any genuine encounter. I trust you will note the question implied by this statement!

Doug Bannerman © 2023

³ Eliade, *Mercea Myths, Dreams & Mysteries* (Fontana: London and Glasgow 1968) pp 245,246

Sermon on Matthew 13:44-58 Sunday 30th July

By Mark Stuckey

I offer us a challenge! Are you ready for it?

- What do you treasure most in your life? Do you have that treasure out on display, or do you hide it?
- Do you have a pearl in your life? Again, is it out on display, or is it hidden?

Today's gospel passage from Matthew allows us to hear from Jesus some more parables which speak about the **value** of the kingdom of heaven. In part, we are going to learn what the kingdom is really worth.

Jesus is in the middle of a flurry of parables that teach us more about the kingdom of heaven.

The people of God have heard about the Kingdom of heaven before, but now they are hearing it in a new and revolutionary way. Jesus is revealing more and more, and the wheels are spinning faster and faster as the kingdom of heaven starts to come to life.

There are four pieces of this passage I want to unpack with you:

1. The kingdom is priceless.
2. The kingdom is exclusive.
3. Kingdom treasures are old and new.
4. The King it not always honoured.

The kingdom is priceless.

We read about this pricelessness in verses 44-46.

These verses have two pictures of value, showing us worth in something. What is this worth in something, you may be asking?

It is the kingdom of heaven!

Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." People try to make this parable about Israel, or the Church, or other things that have value connected to them, but it is clearly about the kingdom of heaven. It is about the place and people of God surrounded by God's glory and the presence throughout all eternity.⁴

So, the kingdom of heaven is like a great treasure and a priceless pearl.

⁴ <https://fbcbartow.org>

Recently, Loretta and I purchased and had installed dash cams into our individual vehicles. We saw these as valuable pieces of equipment that we could have in our cars. At the time of buying them we did our research. We discovered that the top of the range and most expensive option came with high-definition night-time vision, continual cloud-based storage capacity, access footage by phone and would capture footage while in park through



motion sensors. We considered while these features were great - we did not need them. The next range down was in our price range, came with reasonable night-time vision, storage space of up to 60 hours' worth of footage, phone access and would capture footage while in park through motion sensors. A better option for us. Last Friday week I came home from work and Loretta was looking at her phone. I said to Loretta, how was your day and she said we had an incident at work, six vehicles had their tyres slashed while parked in the work car park. Several of Loretta's colleagues witnessed the events occurring outside from inside the building. Loretta's dash cam was able to capture footage of the incident unfolding and now has been passed onto the police as evidence. The same day individuals were arrested. After just one week from installation, the value of the dash cam was seen.

In our gospel passage Jesus is pointing us to the great value of the kingdom of heaven.

We read of a man who discovers a treasure in a field, and he hides that treasure back where it was in order to buy the field. He obviously doesn't have enough money to buy the field, so he sells everything that he has to buy it. Not only did he sell everything he had, but he did so with joy! He was joyful to give up everything to obtain the treasure.

Similarly, a merchant who is on the hunt for the valuable fine pearls finds a pearl that is more than fine, it is priceless! In order to gain the priceless pearl, the man goes and sells everything!



The meaning is obvious! Here's the revealed truth for us from Jesus: the kingdom of heaven is priceless. Can I challenge you again?

Have you ever considered how much you pay for something?

- It might be to do with your health – seeking to have perfect health!
- It might be to do with having a happy family.
- It might be about being accepted.
- It might be spending money on your appearance, a pleasure activity, or even paying for a second chance to put things right.

We can pay a lot of money for those things.

What about the kingdom of God?

The beauty of the Gospel is that we can have much more than all the treasure and pleasures that this world has to offer. We can gain the kingdom of heaven!

The Kingdom of heaven is so valuable that it's worth us giving up everything else to gain it.

We can give up our possessions, our health, our family, opportunities, friends and even our own lives because in Jesus, we have everything.

Finding Jesus and developing a relationship with Him is priceless and more valuable when we view the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom is exclusive.

In verses 47 to 50 Jesus gives us a second picture of what the kingdom of heaven will be like. The illustration in these verses is the casting out of a fishing net and catching all kinds of fish. The catch will be a mixture. If we apply that to the Church, which is the instrument of God's Kingdom upon earth, it must mean that the church cannot be selective and discriminative, that the earthly church is bound to be a mixture as well, that it will contain all kinds of people, the good, the bad, the useful, the not so useful, and that it is not ours to judge. Throughout history the Church has been seen as exclusive as well as inclusive.⁵ The exclusive view is that the Church is for people who are good, people who, as it is said, are really and fully committed, people



⁵ W. Barclay (1963, p 99) The Daily Study Bible - The Gospel of Matthew – Volume 2, St Andrews Press

who are quite different from the world. This could look attractive, but it is not the view of New Testament and the teachings of Jesus. Matthew 7:1 tells us not to judge and we see this with Jesus as he welcomes everyone into presence. This is the inclusive view of church where it is open to all and will be a mixture. But Jesus also taught and explained that there is a day of reckoning for everybody at the end of this age. The good will be sorted from the bad with eternal consequences. It is not that the "good" will have been found perfect in themselves. Rather, they have accepted to be covered with Christ's righteousness as compared to those who have rejected Christ.

There's only one way into heaven and there only one type of person who gets in: those who are redeemed by Jesus.⁶

Kingdom treasures are old and new.

Jesus gives us a third picture of the kingdom of heaven. In verses 51 to 52 speaks of treasures that are both old and new. Jesus is checking the understanding of his disciples regarding his teaching and wanting to build upon that understanding.

What Jesus is doing in these verses is he is tying together the truths of the Old Testament law and the truths of being His disciple. Both the old and the new are seen as treasures and are considered valuable. Woven together gives us the law of God and teachings of Jesus to show us what the kingdom of heaven will look like.⁷

The King is not always honoured.

We see this in our final verses, versus 53 to 58.

A final challenge. Can your attitudes towards a person prevent you from experiencing the real value of that person? In other words, do our attitudes create a barrier.

Jesus has demonstrated to us that he is worthy of all glory honour and praise.

Even during His ministry on earth, He demonstrated His power over sickness and death, and he showed that he could perform miracles and teach with great authority. Yet, not everyone honoured him as Messiah.

In his hometown in Nazareth, the people do not show Him honour. They were hostile towards Him. When He spoke, they

⁶ <https://fbcbartow.org>

⁷ <https://fbcbartow.org>

would not listen to Him because they knew His father and His mother and His brothers and His sisters. They could not conceive that anyone who had lived among them and whom they had known had any right to speak as Jesus was speaking. The prophet, as so often happens had no honour in his own country and their attitude to him raised a barrier which made it impossible for Jesus to have any effect upon them. To the people of Nazareth – he was just Jesus!

He didn't get the respect he deserved because these people saw him just as the guy they knew from Nazareth, rather than the saviour of the world.

The people of Nazareth missed out on the work of Jesus because of their unbelief and their lack of honour that they showed Him. This was not the last time that Jesus would not receive the honour due to him because people did not really understand who he was and what he was doing.

May we never miss out on the work of Jesus because of our unbelief in him and of his work.

The kingdom of heaven is real and is available to us.

In these parables Jesus, explains the value of His Kingdom, and the foolishness of chasing after the things of the world. His Kingdom is what life is all about; yet we tend to wrongly preoccupy ourselves with life in a dysfunctional way. We must come to the point that these teachings from our Lord make a difference. We must ask the question, and present a real, genuine answer to our Lord and to others around us: Is our faith in Christ authentic; is it making a difference? Or, are we the faker, the pretender, the person who causes strife and dysfunction in His church instead of glorifying Him? The answer to the question of whether our faith is real or pretend requires us to be discerning, to see if our heart is receiving His Word, or are we only looking to ourselves. Is life all about **"me,"** or is it all about **Him**? If it is all about **"me,"** then there is a good chance our faith is fake, or, at least, needs a lot of work. If your motivation is all about **"Him,"** then there is a good chance you are real, an authentic disciple of our Lord, and are applying His Truths into your life.⁸ Friends, ultimately Jesus Himself is the reward. He is the treasure. He is the pearl we should hold onto and not hide away! Amen.

Mark Stuckey, LLM

⁸ <http://www.intothyword.org>

Sentence of the Day

The Lord is near to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desire of all that fear him, hears their cry, and saves them.

Psalm 145.18–19

Collect

O God, giver of life and health,
whose Son Jesus Christ has called us to hunger and thirst for
justice: refresh us with your grace,
that we may not be weary in well-doing,
for the sake of him who meets all our needs,
Jesus Christ our Saviour;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Mark 9:2-10

²Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one^[a] on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,^[b] one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved;^[c] listen to him!' ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.