

8th Sunday after Pentecost, yr. a, 7/26/2020  
Romans 8:26-39; Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52  
Hidden Kingdom – Rev. Dr. Deborah M. Jenks

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What is prayer? Do you find prayer easy or hard? I think at times we find prayer intimidating, difficult, because we think we need to have the words ... the purity of heart ... we fear that our prayers will somehow not measure up ... we're not sure we believe so we feel like hypocrites when we pray. But what if prayer is not something we have to do perfectly, or the right way, or is even dependent on our belief?

Prayer is way of being in relationship with God. Prayer is conversation with God ... asking for help, thanking, noticing gifts and blessings, noticing the wonder of the world we live in. Prayer is asking questions, seeking strength, complaining ... Prayer is not a whole lot different from all that is involved in sustaining loving relationships with anybody, and trying to live in the world. As essential as food, drink, clothing, shelter, and being cared for even as we care for others ... Except, like other things in our lives, we ignore it or take it for granted, get distracted, and then prayer becomes an erratic, sometime thing ... something squeezed in, if we remember.

What can distract us from prayer ... cause us to forget ... what makes it hard to pray as if our living depended on it?

Distractions – we live in a noisy world ... and we shut out the noise by making our own noise. We live to our own private sound track and what brings us comfort for the moment.

So when do we find the time and inclination to pray ... to listen for God, converse with God ... be with God?

“...the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes ... We know that all things work together for those who love God ...”

(Romans 8:26-29) I take great comfort in this – and think of my prayers working much as God’s Spirit works.

When Jesus’ disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he told them, “Pray in this way; ‘Our Father in heaven, holy is your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven ...’” In our Gospel reading, Jesus offers us some images – parables – of God’s kingdom come, offers us images that point to what our praying is like.

The kingdom of heaven is like ... a seed planted, dough kneaded with leaven, a merchant’s selling and buying, fishers fishing, treasure found in a field ...

ordinary people doing the ordinary things of life, and through it all the Spirit of God working it all for good, for salvation of all.

The kingdom of heaven is like ... prayer ...

- Share and elicit some experiences of prayer ... For me: daily chapel, Angelus, "driving prayer", meal prayers, bedtime prayers. Morning prayer. Walking prayers etc.
- Share Jewish prayer tradition of blessing – (copy pg. 20-21 of Essential Judaism) Celtic prayer tradition ... Psalms

The kingdom of heaven is like Prayer – the weaving of all that makes up our lives, our world, and its people into the kingdom of God. – the way all things work together for good for those who love God ...

Church is a place where we learn to pray – and share in the prayers of others.

Community of prayer and worship – Weaves the every day world in which we live and work, family, friends, strangers, creation itself together for good, so that nothing ... neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of god in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Rom. 8:37-39)

For 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 ... The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a

field, which someone found then hid; then in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys it. ...

(Share prayer: "Be still, and know that I am God." from Psalm 46:10 )

Be still, and know that I am God.

Be still, and know that I am ...

Be still, and know ...

Be still, ...

Be ...