



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

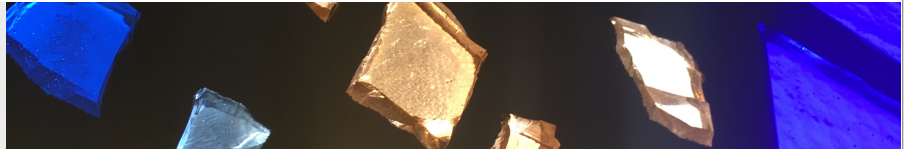
Week of February 12, 2023 (Matthew 13:24-43)

Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

In the mystery of your love, you reveal what has been hidden. In the clarity of your teaching, you invite us to deeper wonder. We thank you for the blessing of exploration, for the journey of seeking and finding anew your grace in the familiar and the unexpected.

We pray this day for those whose exploration has been curtailed, who have been closed down and taught to believe there's only one way to see and to be. We ask for the wind of your Spirit to work her way into the cracks, to blow open hearts and minds with possibility.

We pray this day for those who cannot imagine the abundance of your stories, for those who long for even a bite of bread, and yet there is none, those who go to school hungry while down the street we waste food without thought, those who work long hours to feed others but get paid nearly nothing for...



Devotions for Life

Context: We've been working through the Gospel of Matthew without skipping much so far, but this week we skip from chapter 7 to chapter 13. In chapter 7 Jesus concludes The Sermon on the Mount, and then in chapters 8-12, we get a lot of stories of Jesus in Galilee teaching/arguing in the synagogues, healing the sick, casting out demons, and dining with sinners. In all of this good work, he also does things that violate the Torah (e.g.: touching lepers and healing on the Sabbath).

It is important to remember the ways in which Jesus' work challenge 1st Century interpretations of the Torah, because this is what generates the tension between him and the religious elite.

And all of that leads us to chapter 13, where his work shifts from healing and teaching in the synagogues to teaching in parables.

Parables are not merely stories or metaphors.

Until this point Jesus' teachings are pretty straightforward, but with parables, the move goes from head knowledge about the Torah and how to live it out to opening up one's spirit for personal reflection. It's easy to move quickly to asking "what does the parable mean?", which is not a bad question, but before that we are meant to sit with parables and wonder what they



... themselves. We ask for your Spirit to leaven your people with generosity, that we might rise to the occasion, and that the abundance you provide might be shared so all may be fed. Make your kingdom visible on earth, O Lord our God, and help us shine the light that reveals your love to the world, even now. We ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Compassion & Justice

Black History Month:

February is Black History Month. Consider watching some movies this month that speak to black history and culture in America. Here are a few suggestions:

A Raisin in the Sun (1961)
Roots (1977)
A Soldier's Story (1984)
The Color Purple (1985)
Do the Right Thing (1989)
Glory (1989)
Malcolm X (1992)
Remember the Titans (2000)
42 (2013)
Selma (2014)
Hidden Figures (2016)
BlackKkKlansman (2018)
Black Panther (2018)
Fences (2016)
The Hate U Give (2018)
Jim Crow of the North (2019)
Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (2020)

might be stirring within us.

In this week's passage we get three parables: One about wheat and weeds, one about a mustard shrub/tree, and one about yeast and flower. But we also get a rare moment of Jesus explicitly explaining a parable as well. It begs the question, "why does he do that?" Regardless all three of these parables are about what the "Kingdom of Heaven is like". Keep that in mind as you reflect on them.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. What words, phrases, or images stand out to you in these verses? Which of the three parables strikes you the most?
2. What might Jesus be getting at in the parable when he says "for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat..."? What do you think this parable means for you or your community?*
3. What/Who are "evildoers"? How do we feel about this language? What do you think Jesus means by using this image with reference to the devil? What significance might this image have for your community?*
4. What do you think the Parable of the Mustard Seed is saying about the Kingdom of Heaven here in Matthew?
5. What do you think the Parable of the Yeast is saying?
6. What is God calling you to through these readings?
7. In this passage, Jesus gives three parables about the kingdom of heaven. When you read these parables together, what conclusions can you draw about the nature of the kingdom of heaven? What conclusions might you draw about how the church should be living today?*

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