



15th Sunday Homily

Who does Jesus think is in the Kingdom of Heaven? We might say: Well, people who have discovered God through Jesus. Catholics certainly, or possibly our view is wider, all

Christians. We are often pretty sure we know who is **not** likely to be included, though we know that the boundaries may be a bit woolly at times, and we may find ourselves half in and half out at times.

But when Jesus is speaking about the Kingdom of God, he is not talking about creating a Church as a super-club of humans that get it, that is made up of those who are fertile ground for the seed of the gospel, as opposed to those who aren't. His starting point is that we are all God's creation. We begin as natural members of the Kingdom regardless of who we are or what faith we profess or none.

And he comes to help us realise that our happiness is ultimately found when we once more discover our God-given roots. There was a discussion on the radio recently where African Americans had made connections through DNA-tracing with family in Africa. Some of you might remember Kunta Kinte and the film 'Roots' back in 1976. This ongoing and successful search for roots, as all said on the radio, has brought them a real peace. They had found where they came from.

In the first reading with the rain, and with the seed in the gospel, God does not shower the rain only in special places or sow the seed only in areas he thinks are worth it, he covers the whole earth and everyone in it with the abundance of his grace. As the psalm says: 'you fill the earth with your riches,' 'Abundance flows in your steps.'

Now parables, like this gospel, are not meant to give us easy answers, they are like riddles and made to make us think. They are literally in Greek, 'things we throw alongside our lives' to help us have a good look at ourselves, and find our way. At the same time they do not have to have just one meaning, or one area of application.

When Matthew uses this parable for his Jewish Christian community, he is probably trying to answer their question, 'Why do the other Jews not

see the light and join us?’ And Jesus is saying, well God does his best but there has to be a response from us. For a variety of reasons, some people just don’t get it, but they still can, God never gives up on us.

The danger over the centuries has been for people to turn this into a ‘We’re all right, we have got it and we are inside the Church, so we are saved,’ in a rather self-satisfied way. That is never Jesus’ intention. He never intends to lock people out, he doesn’t like boundaries.

In one sense what he might be saying to us is that even when you are inside the Church there are all sorts of degrees as to really having heard the word. And the whole point is to help the whole Church bear a rich harvest.

More likely yet he is looking at the whole world and not about a narrow definition of Church.

Where this parable begins is with the Kingdom of Heaven, and as I said, that means all of us, as human beings. He wants us all to be citizens of this Kingdom. And the seed is being scattered, not in some narrow way, but over everyone and everything. Like the rain, as we know in Cumbria all too well, it does not discriminate where it falls. Nor is it necessarily referring to those who have literally heard the word of God, as in the pages of the Gospel.

But the harvest bearers are those who have responded to the love of God that is revealed, as St. Paul says, in so many ways in Creation and the word. It is not about being in a particular church or faith, but it is in those who sense and listen to their True, divinely-given, Self, where God is indwelling, as Richard Rohr might say, and respond to that love, and his presence within.

That is where we find peace. We worry sometimes that others, even members of the family, are not going to church. But that is not the measure of the Kingdom, even though we would love to have them there meeting God with us in so special a way. The measure is in discovering God’s love, even if we do not recognise it as God’s, and living fully and joyfully with and for others in response. Then we have found our real roots; we are at home with God and at peace.