



Become Children of the Kingdom

July 23, 2017

Thought for the Week

Scripture: Romans 8:26-27 • Matthew 13:24-43

Is there a person in the world, man, woman or child, who is not delighted by a good story?

I can testify from my own experience as a Pastor that those listening to my voice will come alive the moment I say the words: "Let me tell you a story." Until that moment many of them may have been consulting their I-Phone, paging through the Sunday bulletin or watching a child who is wiggling in their chair or asking for more goodies to eat. A preacher can preach on some theological issue until he is blue in the face and not attract much attention, but when he shares some personal event from his life or a favorite story, the assembled faithful will spring brightly to attention.

This is not a phenomenon current in our age. Civilizations throughout the world have been sharing stories from their cultures for thousands of years. Stories are the way history and culture is passed down. People do not ask whether the story is true or not; they simply believe it represents life in the age they are living. An ancient axiom puts it this way: "All stories are true, some of them have even happened."

Stories, of course, describe life in the world of the story teller: In the world of Sacred Scripture, for instance, the story of Adam and Eve or Cain and Abel convey life as it might have been or could have been in the world of any age of worldly time.

We must also insist that stories can be a teaching tool if one is conversant with the language and customs of the teller and the listener. Given that assumption, let's turn to the gospel that is rich with stories Jesus told for the interest of the people of his time. A caution however: to understand these metaphors one must be somewhat conversant with agricultural terminology for all these stories have to do with seed, good and bad, the seed bed and threats to the harvest.

Not having had the experience of living on a farm in my younger days, I have read about the importance of planting good seed. Long before seeding time farmers place their bushels of wheat through the cleaner to sift out small mustard seeds that would later choke out the young wheat plants.

In each of Jesus parables there appears at least three elements: the reign of God or the way the world would look if God had his way; second, the enemy who poisons the seed bed (the people of this world) with destructive seeds and lastly the harvester who is responsible for knowing the difference between a good and bad harvest.

The point Jesus is making to his rural listeners is that he is the farmer who sows good seed; we are the seed-bed who live in a world that is burdened with many things that are contrary to the reign of God, the way God would urge us to live. The enemy (the devil) in the parable would include those many distractions in this world that make it difficult for us to live a life of one hundred fold.

Finally, in the parable Jesus cautions us not to make judgments about the enemy or the bad seed. He insists that we may never know which seed is good or bad, nor will we know whether or not the enemy is truly bad. In other words, judgment is the Lord's alone. Our task as the seedbed is to grow under God's guidance and produce good works.

Interestingly in the longer version of this gospel it turns out that even Jesus' own disciples did not understand the story; so he had to re-explain it to them again. Well, perhaps that's the way it is in this world: it takes a long time for us to know the difference between good and bad seed, but if we grow in holiness, Jesus, the harvester will bundle us up with the good and we will finally understand the meaning of the reign of God.

Happy Birthday – Ann (7/24) & Clark (7/29)

Become Like Little Children

A Day in the Life of a Pre-school Teacher

As I walk down the hall to my classroom at 7:30 in the morning, I hear the familiar sounds of one of my little boys screaming. As I do, I can't help but think it's going to be one of those days.

As soon as I enter the room, he runs to me with tears streaming down his little face, crying, "Ms. Lisa, Ms. Lisa." After giving him a reassuring hug, I gather up the shoes he has kicked across the room and head to the kitchen to fix breakfast for the rest of our friends.

The Golden Rule

Most of the children have arrived in the classroom by midmorning. There is the customary pushing and fighting over toys or any number of other crises typical to three- and four-year-old children. Yes, it really is going to be one of those days.

Later, we sit down for our daily Bible lesson. Considering how our day has been going, I decide to teach about the golden rule. It's a subject we cover often, my hope being that something will sink in one day.

When asked what the golden rule means to them, a symphony of little voices chime in with "Treat others like you want them to treat you." We talk about how it applies to daily crises such as whether you should push someone who has pushed you. They all agree that we haven't been practicing it today.

I asked what they thought we needed to do to help us practice the golden rule. One beautiful little girl raised her hand and said, "We can pray."

Wow! It caught me off guard. That was not the answer I was expecting from a three-year-old child. So, of course, that is what we did. That's when it hit me what Jesus Christ meant when He said,

"we should become like little children."