

That is, it is the coming close of the living God into fields and markets and homes and streets, meeting the sinner and the saint, the sick and the strong, the learned and the simple, the young and the old, men and women.



The world of Jesus' time had a very strong sense of sin and evil. Evil could be caught through proximity. It was, in some sense, contagious. It's a common enough idea. Parents still warn their children not to mix with certain of their friends lest they become like them. Jesus didn't seem to worry too much about the contagion of wickedness. He sat and ate with anyone who would join him. His enemies called him a glutton and drunkard who ate with sinners.

DISCOVERING THE KINGDOM

Rather, Jesus believed in the contagiousness of holiness. He invited all sorts of dubious characters to sit and eat and talk with him and his disciples, to share what they had, to experience the gracious fruits of God's kingdom before he ever challenged them to change. He believed they would "catch" the kingdom and its joy and fellowship and discover how different their lives could be. They would come to know themselves the beloved sons and daughters of God, desired by God from all eternity.

As Jesus' disciples today, it is our calling to so live that others coming in off the streets to our worship, and into our homes, might discover among us the pearl of great price whose riches we already enjoy. May it be so.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**God is in his holy place,  
God who unites those who dwell in his house;  
he himself gives might and strength to his people.**

FIRST READING 1 Kings 3:5. 7-12

PSALM Psalm 118

RESPONSE **Lord, how I love your law!**

1. My part, I have resolved, O Lord, is to obey your word.  
The law from your mouth means more to me than silver and gold. **R.**
2. Let your love be ready to console me by your promise to your servant.  
Let your love come to me and I shall live for your law is my delight. **R.**
3. That is why I love your commands more than finest gold.  
That is why I rule my life by your precepts: I hate false ways. **R.**

4. Your will is wonderful indeed; therefore I obey it.  
The unfolding of your word gives light and teaches the simple. **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 8:28-30

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Blessed are you, Father,  
Lord of heaven and earth,  
for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children.  
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Matthew 13:44-52

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.  
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.**

**Next Sunday's Readings:**  
Isaiah 55:1-3  
Romans 8:35. 37-39  
Matthew 14:13-21

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HIDDEN TREASURE

Stories of buried treasure exist in all folk literature. They express a hope that a completely gratuitous occurrence could make a total change in our lives, transferring us from a state of care, coldness, hunger or horror into a world where all our desires could be satisfied. These stories are a universal expression of desire for meaning in the midst of lives often marked by absurdity or sickness, or violence and brokenness. They are a fundamental expression of human hope: that we'll just come across something that is of such value that, possessing it, we'll have nothing to worry about.



I remember my granddad driving us home from Mass in a pony and cart. It had been raining and now there was a beautiful rainbow in the brightening sky. My granddad told me that at the end of the rainbow was a crock of gold hidden by the fairies. So I begged him to go faster. But the faster we went, the quicker the rainbow disappeared and, sadly, we never found the crock of gold.

Religion can be like that. Against the dark it promises light, against fear it promises joy, against absurdity it promises meaning, against loneliness it promises community, against hate it promises love. But religious structures or even doctrines cannot provide these remedies. They must come from something deeper.

Judaism in the time of Jesus had different ways of promising these things. Most depended on some form of faithful practice of a variety of traditions. Some, like the Pharisees and Essenes, required the following of many rules and regulations; some were dependent on the chance of being born into blessed groups like the aristocratic Sadducees; some needed penitential practices of prayer and sacrifice in the Temple. And in the midst of these Matthew's community was still working out how its members were to receive the promise of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Pretty soon the Church itself would work out codes and rules and regulations that its virtuous members would need to follow if they were to be one with it and one with the God who called it into being. But it is worth remembering that Jesus did not talk much about the Church or about religious structures and doctrines. The treasure in the field, the pearl of great price is the kingdom of God.

Catching the kingdom



David McLoughlin is a teaching theologian who has spent nearly forty years helping to train Christian teachers, ministers and activists. Today he concludes this series of reflections on the Gospel readings by considering the "contagiousness of holiness".

26 JULY 2020

17TH SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I