

Good Morning. Some of you might've noticed that I have achieved something I can now mark off of my Bucket list. I was featured in the centerfold of a certain boutique publication. That's right. The St. Timothy's monthly newsletter, The Angler. I begged the editor to lay it out sideways so people would have to turn their newsletters in... that certain way... to read the article... but Mitzi refused. Florrie, who always does such a nice job on those profiles, asked me about sermon writing, and I mentioned the rule I learned from a preaching workshop with Peter Gomes, which was to try... now he did say try... to preach on only one thing.

While looking over this morning's Gospel, I found myself asking – well... what was the one thing Jesus was preaching about? And it turns out, as I looked across the stories and sayings of this long Pentecost season, there might be two things Jesus was talking about. He missed the workshop.

It seems, in most cases anyway, that Jesus is trying to show us what - or where - the Kingdom of God might really be. The Kingdom of God – the realm of God.

God's life – not in the heavens or in paradise in some other remote place but to show us the life God has here. Now. Among us. Within you.

If you recall, his teachings this season have been about a father and his disrespectful son, a good landowner with murderous tenants, a generous king with non responsive and ungrateful guests, a delayed bridegroom and his ill-prepared bridesmaids, and today's harsh master with his slave-stewards. And in-between were lessons about coins, humility, and blessings. All in an attempt to show us God's life. What, where, or who the Kingdom of God might really be.

The second thing Jesus keeps saying is that we need to watch for it. To wait for it. To be ready for the kingdom of God coming. Stay awake. Fill your lamps. Be accountable. Sheep & Goats. Wheat and tares. It's coming. Be alert. Be ready.

You might've noticed, the Kingdom of God seems not only to bang around in familiar things and places, but also in people like.... us. The kingdom of God is like a merchant. It is like a seed. A net. The head of a household. Yeast. Like regular people and the regular stuff of their days. People who lead, and people who have been left behind. People

who bloom were they are planted, and people consumed by weeds. Using their gifts, or exploiting others. Tending to the smallest of blessings and kindnesses, or squandering and stealing the riches of this life. The kingdom of god is all of those things, and we are, and do, all of those things.

We are planters and reapers, owners and borrowers. Not just of land or silver, but of children & this St. Timothy's family, of work, carpools and retirement funds, of friendships and gardens. We are masters, and slaves, of opportunities - - opportunities to be blessed, and to be a **blessing** to others. To use our power to heal.

And it is a messy enterprise, all of it. I think that's why we have to be told in so many ways, with so many analogies, parables, sermons and morality tales. It's hard, and we need reminding.... we need convincing... that it's worth the work it takes to be ready and steady as bearers of God's life now.

So we have to take-on the disciplines and practices that help us not just carry that life, but see it carried in others. In that person who just cut you off in traffic. In our fellow travelers, young & old, clogging up the grocery store aisles, at your holiday tables, and in these pews right here,

sitting next to you – these saints among us who probably have cut you off in traffic, and who don't always live up to your expectations, and who once said something so perfect to you that it healed you, even if only in that moment.

So, our one message, which is two... is that our work is to be ready, and respond. Ready to seek and serve God in this glorious mess, in order to build, not tear down, this kingdom. To strive for justice and peace in this kingdom that resides in us, and between us.

So when someone is mean to our kid, or a store manager too busy, or a person with power takes advantage of someone with less... rather than react in-kind out of a lack of readiness, we claim what is holy in that difficult moment. We recognize that naming the beauty and power of God's life among us might be at stake, and we respond, with clear and strong intention. We boycott. We write letters, vote, speak up.

Today's particular story reminds us that sometimes doing so will cost us. When accused of being lazy the slave said "You know what? You're right. The *easiest* thing I could have done would have been to drop your money off at the bank in your name, and walk away, letting it earn interest. But you are a harsh and greedy man. So I did something a little

harder – I took a shovel and found a secluded spot and buried your money, and hid the location, so when you returned – you earned nothing. **Nothing.** So here’s your money back.” Boom. And while the master does not disagree with him, he still withholds his blessing from this slave, this slave who liberation theologians label as a whistle blower. This slave is cast out.

This is God’s realm. This is being ready. Sometimes we are brave. And sometimes we aren’t. And we are still the kingdom of God. And so was the harsh master. See – he’s also a part of this story.

As bearers of God’s life, we need to keep our lamps filled. Watch and see... where are you called to bear God’s justice? Go there. Be silent. Be loud. Work the system. Plow the fields. Read, mark, and inwardly digest these stories, so we can respond to the invitation into God’s life with gladness. Claim what is holy. Bring truth with clarity, and with love.

We will make mistakes, and we will shine. Because story after story tells us that this is it. The kingdom of god is within us. The epistle today reminds us beautifully that across the seasons of this sometimes dark world, we are called to be children of light. God bearers in this messy, wondrous, holy kingdom.

Let's pray. God our lives are in your hands. Thank you for reminding us that we are holy, and put readiness upon us, that our lives will proclaim you to the world. Amen.