

I always loved multiple choice tests because it gave you a shot at the right answer if you weren't sure. And today in our Gospel, we have a multiple choice...what is heaven, God's kingdom like, and Jesus comes back with 5 parables actually 4, teaching moments as options.

The kingdom of God Jesus says is like a mustard seed. Ever so tiny, it grows ever so big.

Last week as we talked about the homeless in Union County and the Interfaith Hospitality Network that began down the hall 25 years ago, it was a mustard seed moment. One volunteer, Kim Delatour, at one Council meeting and so began the network in Union County that has spread nationwide, today counting 165 affiliates, 5000 congregations and 135,000 volunteers who shelter and care for the homeless. And what a great image in that parable of that mustard tree providing shelter.

The kingdom of God is like yeast. It empowers, it enables growth. With his permission I share the tale of Ky Luu. A few years back Patrick Bellone brought Ky along to work the food drive here at Faith. Ky had a good experience and came to more and more of our servant ministries and then joined the Appalachian Ministry team. And during that week, Ky asked about being baptized as a Christian. When we came back from Tennessee we gathered one Sunday here at the font and as Ky came forward, a delightful surprise as the whole Tennessee Mission Team that year came up and surrounded him during his baptism. Yeast that grew and expanded his understanding of God's place in his life. (Just a footnote...Patrick who brought Ky...it wasn't a long time before, that someone had shared the invitation with Patrick, inviting him to Faith). See how that yeast works?

The kingdom of God is like a hidden treasure, like a great pearl. That when you discover it, you just fully claim it. One of the great joys of my ministry has been to see people who had no clue what servant ministry and faith were about and to see how it changed their lives. People who finally moved out of their selfish modes and discovered the joy that comes with giving and caring for others. Peddes?

The kingdom of heaven is like that net that catches fish of every kind. EVERY kind. When we count the blessings of God, we celebrate the rich interfaith partnerships that define us. From a menorah on the lawn each December, to Sikhs and Muslims who have been our teachers. To being part of the ELCA which has finally joined us in our understandings of the fullness of God's community...inclusive of race and language, gender and nationality, and now thank God, sexual orientation.

So what is the kingdom of God like? My favorite answer, "all of the above." It has unbelievable potential; it grows people and institutions; it is life changing; and it is always inclusive. And Matthew's message throughout his Gospel: It is here, it is now and it is for you.