

# FAITH @ HOME

Week of July 26, 2020

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

## ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

**READ:** Matthew 13:31-33,44-52

**REFLECT:** The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. The kingdom of heaven is like yeast. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

This week Jesus uses three parables to teach his followers about God's eternal kingdom. Jesus' parables are like secret codes. They are stories about things Jesus' audience knew about, like farming and baking, but with hidden messages about God.

Mustard seeds begin teeny tiny, but with proper care they grow into a bush so big that birds can nest within its branches. Yeast is also teeny tiny, but when it's mixed with flour, it can make loaves and loaves of bread. Jesus knows that his message is starting out small. But he also knows this teeny gathering of disciples is able to grow and grow until all the world knows about God.

**RESPOND:** Small children are learning the concepts of faith. These are the small seeds that can grow into a robust faith with the proper care. Mustard seeds require care in the form of sunlight and water. Wonder aloud with children about what their faith needs to grow. How might they water their faith? How might they shine light on it? It's also important to emphasize these small children do not have to wait until they are grown-ups to accomplish mighty acts of faith. God often chooses people no one else is expecting God to choose to do extraordinary things. What are the mighty acts these young children might do for God while they are still small?

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ALLISON LILES



The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles is a wife, mother, peacemaker, and priest learning to navigate life in the suburban wilds of Dallas, Texas. After working as Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Executive Director for six years, Allison has re-entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She currently serves as the Priest-in-Charge of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas and the editor of Grow Christians, a ministry of Forward Movement.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



# FAITH @ HOME

Week of July 26, 2020

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

## ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

**READ:** Matthew 13:31-33,44-52

**REFLECT:** *“The kingdom of heaven is like...”* In today’s reading, Jesus uses this phrase six times, each time using different examples to illustrate the kingdom of heaven. Comparison parables work because they compare something unfamiliar to something familiar. But some of the examples Jesus uses might be harder for us to understand because we haven’t bought a field, or baked bread, or caught fish! So, what is Jesus trying to say? The first two parables might be about growth. But not just bigger – growth that transforms! A mustard seed starts tiny and grows unbelievably large, large enough to support others. Yeast transforms every other ingredient, allowing bread dough to not only expand, but become something delicious and nourishing. The next two parables are about seeking and discovery. The hidden treasure is unexpected – a surprise discovery that is greater than everything that came before. The great pearl is the result of an intentional search, the focus of a lifelong quest. The final parable might be frightening because it sounds as if people are being sorted. But no person is entirely good or entirely evil. So perhaps it suggests that in this life, we all experience and reflect both good and bad, but in the kingdom of God, only good will remain. Like the trained scribe, we prepare for God’s eternal kingdom, drawing on our history and our hopes, and we grow, transform, and come to the conclusion of our journey.

**RESPOND:** In these parables, there is action, so bring them to life! Plant a seed and talk about its change from a small speck hidden in the dirt to a leafy green plant. Bake and eat homemade bread. Would each ingredient taste as good eaten separately? Go on a scavenger hunt in your house, with more difficult-to-find items assigned higher values. Organize closets together – sorting and donating older, outgrown clothes and toys. Not quite good and evil, but in casting them aside, is there space for growth? Finally, consider old and new. Look at family photos or share stories and talk about the values that you learned from your elders and note the transformative influence of younger family members.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA BROWN



Lisa Brown is the Director of Digital Ministry for Membership Vision. She is passionate about enriching the spiritual lives of people of all ages, facilitating immersive learning opportunities, collaborative art installations, and digital engagement. Her book, *The Best VBS Workbook Ever!* was published in 2017 and she is also a contributing writer to John Roberto’s book, “Faith Formation with a New Generation” and 2020 InsideOut camp curriculum. Lisa continues to grow in personal faith and understanding through her participation in Education for Ministry (EfM), and earned a Certification in Leadership in Lifelong Faith Formation from Virginia Theological Seminary and Forma. A native of Pittsburgh, Lisa enjoys hiking the woods of Western Pennsylvania.

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



# FAITH @ HOME

Week of July 26, 2020

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

## ADULT AND YOUTH

**READ:** Matthew 13: 31-33,44-52

**REFLECT:** How am I living? Think about it. In my Caribbean setting, it was mandatory for one to attend church whether it was a wee day service or a weekend service. It was a way of life. It was considered the best way to raise children because, after all, Holy Scripture reminds us to “train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” (Proverbs 22:6, NRSV)

In today’s Collect, we are invited to look at things eternal and not temporal. What does that mean? Often times we love the things that give us temporary results, and we cautiously remove the things that last a lifetime. Have you had instances in your life where you might have looked towards a quick solution and not a permanent solution? Have you ever compromised your values to make a friend like you?

The kingdom of heaven is a place where all are welcomed, none is refused for the color of their skin or what they believe. All are welcome! The kingdom of heaven is a place where values such as LOVE, PEACE, JOY, PATIENCE, and many more can be experienced. Can we also share a heavenly experience here on earth?

**RESPOND:** On a piece of paper, write down a few characteristics of the kingdom of Heaven. Of those characteristics, which one will you try to practice daily? Explain why, then go and do it! Don’t talk about it, don’t put it off for another time, just go, go and make God’s kingdom come alive on earth.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: TREVAUGHN TODMAN



Trevaughn Todman is the Diocesan Youth Representative for the Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands. Trevaughn loves playing and listening to music and spending time with colleagues and family. His life is based around God, music, and youth. He describes his calling with these lyrics from Charles Wesley: “To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do the Master’s will.”

Faith @ Home is a ministry of



# FAITH @ HOME

Week of July 26, 2020

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

## ADULT AND ADULT

**READ:** Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

**REFLECT:** God's kingdom is not like any kingdom of this world. Every kingdom this world has ever seen, every government, every system created by human architects has or will one day crumble. They are not eternal like the Kingdom of God. But these kingdoms are our frame of reference. They are what we know and so it is hard to imagine what a kingdom might look like if it is not bound by worldly constructs. Jesus tries to help us stretch our minds, to make us understand, by telling us parables about God's kingdom. God's kingdom is like a mustard seed, yeast, treasure, a pearl, a fishing net. Jesus uses ordinary things as illustrations. We know something about each of these things. The way a seed when planted grows. The allure or owning something of value. How a fishing net will catch both what you intend it to and other things. And so, because we are familiar with the nature of these things, we must also know something about the kingdom of God.

**RESPOND:** Jesus' parables reveal something to us about the nature of God and God's reign. They can be fun to play with because they leave so much space for the reader to consider what is happening between the lines. Try writing your own parable that reflects your understanding of God's love for us. Begin with the line: The kingdom of God is like \_\_\_\_\_. Then describe how God works through that thing. Your parable can be a single sentence, like some from our reading, or a longer story. Share your parable aloud and ask, "What do you think this says about the nature of God?"

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: SAMANTHA CLARE



Samantha Clare serves as the Director of Christian Formation at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, AR. She has a passion for spreading Jesus' call for social justice and she helps people to make connections between their daily and spiritual lives so that they can bring their whole and authentic selves to the world. You can find more of her writing at [samanthaclare.me](http://samanthaclare.me).

Faith @ Home is a ministry of

