**READINGS:** Ezekiel 17:22-24/ 2 Cor. 5:6-10/ Mark 4:26-34
**Theme:** The Kingdom of Heaven
11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

The expression, ‘kingdom of God’ appears twice in today’s gospel reading.  In fact the ‘kingdom of God’ or ‘kingdom of heaven’ is the key message of the preaching of Jesus Christ.  He began his ministry with the message, ‘the time has come; the **kingdom of God** is at hand, repent and believe in the good news’ (Mark 1:14). The importance of the ‘kingdom’ can also be seen from the fact that the term appears 127 times in the four gospels together, and it is the subject of most of the parables of Jesus.

It is very easy to describe an earthly kingdom, e.g. Ashanti kingdom and United Kingdom. One can easily talk about:

* Who the king or queen is;
* How he or she was chosen;
* Geographical area or size of the kingdom;
* Its population;
* Its constitution, etc.

It is very easy to do this, because what we are describing is physical, it can be seen or measured. But the kingdom of heaven is not something physical. It is spiritual; it is a mystery; we can’t see nor understand everything about it whilst on this earth.  The kingdom of heaven being a mystery, Jesus chooses to use parables to explain aspects of it. He uses things we know (wheat, weeds, seeds and yeast) to explain what we don’t know.

**THE TWO PARABLES**

Let us now consider some lessons from the two parables of today’s gospel reading.

**PARABLE OF A MAN SOWING A SEED**

**Entrance into Kingdom:** to tell us that entrance into the kingdom of heaven is by God’s grace, Jesus uses the parable of a man sowing a seed and it growing while he was sleeping. In other words, as the growth of the plant is the work of God (and not the work of the sleeping man), so entrance into heaven is first and foremost by the grace of God.

Yet, we have a part to play: as the farmer has to sow the seed, water, till the soil, weed around the plant and cart the rubbish away, so we have a part to play while enjoying God’s grace.  Playing our part includes having faith in God, doing good deed and repenting/confessing our sins.  Our faith is the seed we sow; our good deeds are like watering the seed of our faith and tilling the soil around it; and repenting of our sins and confessing them are like clearing the weeds and carting or burning the rubbish.

**PARABLE OF MUSTARD SEED**

**Entrance into Kingdom:** the parable of the mustard seed also emphasized the earlier point that entrance into heaven depends first and foremost on God’s grace.  For the birds that enjoyed the shelter of the mustard tree did not grow the tree.  Beloved, humans cannot enter heaven purely by their own efforts or on their own merits.  Humans can fly to the moon and to other parts of space; but if we cannot fly to even the sun which is physical, then we are certainly not capable of making a ‘spacecraft’ to fly to heaven!  We can fly to heaven only by the LOVING MERCY-CRAFT operated by the DIVINE MERCY AIRLINE.  This craft, which is fueled by the BLOOD of Jesus Christ, has the same Lord as its sole captain-pilot.  God the Father of mercies is the CEO of this airline, and the Holy Spirit is the sole operator of the CONTROL TOWER.

**Faith and Love:** Once again, while the grace of God is foremost, we have a part to play; and we could pick a lesson from what enabled the birds to fly unto the tree: their wings.  Their pairs of wings could represent the faith and love we need to fly to heaven.  As a bird cannot fly on only one wing, so faith without works of love is useless, and apparent works of love without faith is not sufficient.

**Small beginning:** to tell us that the ‘recruitment’ exercise starts with a few but the end result will be an uncountable number of people in heaven, Jesus tells the parable of the mustard seed: a small seed becomes a big plant. It will be a number that this earth is too small to contain!

May there be room in heaven for each of us, our children, parents, grandparents and friends. Amen!

**CONCLUSION:**

Finally, let me end with something I noticed a few years ago about a friend of mine. He lives and works in UK with work permit but he says he doesn’t want to acquire a dual-citizenship because he aspires to be an MP (Member of Parliament) in Ghana in the future. Similarly, beloved, this earth is not our permanent home. We have only work permit. Let us not live here as if we will stay here forever! Let us rather aspire to be **Members of Paradise** (**MPs** of heaven) where we are citizens (Phil. 3:20-21). Amen!