



**Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (A)**  
**July 24, 2011**  
**Romans 8:26-30 and Matthew 13:31-52**  
*The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato*

+ O God, source of all light, open our hearts to your love and grace through the power of your Spirit. Amen.

The kingdom of heaven is like\_\_\_\_\_. It is a kind of fill-in-the-blank, isn't it?

For little kids and their first trip to Friendly's, the kingdom of heaven is like a Lollapalooza Sunday! Imagine the looks on those faces and the size of those eyes when the server carts out that monster Sunday for the first time!

For middle school or high school kids, the kingdom of heaven is winning a soccer tournament or a tennis tournament or a chess tournament or a.....well, winning a tournament of any kind is a mountain top experience for a young person and a little taste of the kingdom of heaven.

For a couple getting married and that moment when she walks down the aisle and he takes her hand, I have to tell you from my vantage point, it magic. Two lives united with all the promise, joy, hope and expectation possible: a taste of the kingdom of heaven!

For the senior residing in a nursing home, the kingdom of heaven is when she or he is surrounded by grown children and their children and perhaps even their children. I have seen that at Aberjona and other long-term care facilities. It's amazing!

We could go on and on with example after example. The point here is that the kingdom of heaven is not a place out there, up there, somewhere beyond the blue. Jesus tells us what the kingdom of heaven is like in our midst.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that grows into a giant shrub. The kingdom of heaven is like the best of leavened flour. It is like a merchant who finds pearls of great value. It is like a net that miraculously catches tons of fish to everyone's amazement.

So, the kingdom of heaven is also like a Lollapalooza Sunday, the winning of a tournament, the look of love between two people to be married, a look as happy as one might ever hope to see, and the look of the senior surrounded by loving children in the twilight years of life. The kingdom of heaven is these things and oh so much more!

Today, we're reminded that the kingdom of God is here and now. It is in moments of life that make us smile, that bring us to tears, that fill us with hopes and dreams or that challenge us to pray harder in order to think more clearly and more strategically.

The kingdom of heaven is in understanding that God is in the midst of every aspect of our lives, not removed from us, but here with us. God holds us when we need to be held, laughs with us when we laugh and cries with us when we cry. That is the God who is Jesus Christ, not some exalted being in the clouds beyond the farthest galaxy, but the Spirit of God who lives and breathes in us, the Spirit of God “who searches the heart” and who knows what is in our minds. The Spirit guides us and leads us so that “all things [can] work together for good for those who love God.”

In one of Paul’s more breathtaking theological moments, he tells us quite clearly about this loving God: “For I am convinced”...nothing in the world “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This magnificent statement lets us know that all things, the good things, the ‘other’ things, the things that can bring us down, that can debilitate us if we let them, the things that often strain our relationships with one another and/or with God, none of those things can separate us from God.

God is in our midst. If we believe that, then, we acknowledge that God is within us and in every aspect of our lives including relationships we hope will never end. Indeed, it is in our relationship with God and with one another that a truly authentic experience of the kingdom of God can be known. It is in those encounters with ‘the other’ that we experience the God of love and joy, and the God of tenderness and care.

For the three years, we have been about a relationship with one another. From the moment in which I walked through that door, we embarked on a relationship with one another. I believe God has blessed us. God has ‘truly’ blessed us on this journey of faith that we have shared together.

You and I have been changed by that relationship. I hope and pray that God has been all over it, in it and through it. We have experienced the love of God in one another and in this place we call God’s house.

Together, we have shared the Word of God, the Eucharist of God and the fellowship of God and are forever changed. No one or no thing can separate us from that love of God in Christ Jesus, a love we have shared and a love which is undoubtedly a taste of the kingdom of heaven here and now.

Here, we have been trained to experience the kingdom of heaven just like the ‘master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’ We have brought ourselves, our joys and our brokenness. We have offered ourselves to God, and we have become something altogether new.

God has given us God’s blessing. We rejoice and are filled with joy at what we have become. We are God’s holy people empowered to go forth into the world to bring God’s love, peace and joy, the message of the Gospel, to all people. So let it done! Amen!