

Second Presbyterian Church
July 26, 2026 || Year A – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

‘He put before them another parable:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed
that someone took and sowed in his field;
it is the smallest of all the seeds,
but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree,
so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

He told them another parable:

“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast
that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour
until all of it was leavened.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field,
which a man found and reburied;
then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls;
on finding one pearl of great value,
he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net
that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind;
when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down,
and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad.
So it will be at the end of the age.
The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous
and throw them into the furnace of fire,
where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?”

They answered, “Yes.”

And he said to them,

“Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven
is like the master of a household
who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

For the word of God in scripture,
for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us.

Thanks be to God.

A gallon-sized Ziploc bag sits on my apartment’s kitchen counter.

This bag holds images new and old – treasures torn across the years from magazines and
newspapers.

A typewriter.

An icon of a Black Jesus holding a book with the words, “What you have done to
the least of these you have done unto me.”

A headline “thanking a dancer who was ‘wondrous.’”

A collection of silver spoons.

A reading chair sitting next to a window as snow falls outside.

Treasures new and old that I pull from when it is time to pray.

My prayer practice involves pulling from these treasures new and old to create collages in a Strathmore mixed media paper journal.

My prayer practice begins with images because images open me to the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance in ways that words often do not.

My hands pull, sort, shift, place, arrange, re-arrange, cut, tear, glue.

And treasures new and old that have nothing to do with another come together on a blank page.

Their juxtaposition surprises, delights, confuses, and clarifies as the collage birthes new meaning.

The collage offers a feast of images that nourish my soul and invite me to wonder if I understand what is put before me.

Sometimes words unfold, offering light.

Sometimes words falter, and it is the images' glimmering in prayerful silence that offers light.

Jesus creates a collage for us this morning.

Jesus brings out treasures new and old and places them before us to prophetically

“proclaim what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”¹

A mustard seed.

A woman hiding yeast in flour.

A hidden treasure in a field.

A merchant finding one pearl.

A net catching fish of every kind.

It is tempting to choose one of these treasures and to preach upon that one.

But the strength of these treasures lies in their juxtaposition.

Placed next to each other with edges layered upon one other, Jesus creates a collage that reflects the kingdom of heaven.

Something hidden from us. Something revealed to us.

Have we understood all this?

¹ Matthew 13:35

These images unfold before us – surprise, delight, confuse us – as they reveal the light of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus places before us a parable.

Jesus tells us another parable.

The kingdom of heaven is like...

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like...

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like...

The unfolding of Jesus' poetic words creates a collage – a feast of treasures new and old meant to feed our souls.

Have we understood all this?

Do we understand the mustard seed that becomes a tree where birds nest?

Do we understand the woman hiding yeast in flour to create enough bread to feed one hundred people?

Do we understand the man who sells everything to buy the field with a hidden treasure?

Do we understand the merchant who sells everything to buy one pearl?

Do we understand the net that catches fish of every kind and the angelic work of sorting what that net caught?

Have we understood all this?

In Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus asks the disciples this question, they simply respond, "Yes."

That is a "yes" that I am not able to give.

I do not understand all that Jesus places before us.

Jesus' collage is one that I need to spend a lifetime prayerfully holding – a lifetime of sitting with these treasures new and old – these images placed before us again and again and again and again and again.

A lifetime of sitting down with all that becomes caught in the dragnet of Jesus' woven images – trusting that all will be sorted at the end of the age.

A lifetime of eagerly anticipating seeds and yeast becoming treasures and pearls.

A lifetime of examining Jesus' collage and wondering what the juxtaposition of Jesus' images means in my life and in this world.

A lifetime of knowing that when words falter, the images themselves give light as they unfold.

And while I do not understand the fullness of what the kingdom of heaven is like, I can share what the kingdom of heaven was like for me this last week.

The kingdom of heaven is like a prayer shawl passed from Susan to me to my mom.

The kingdom of heaven is like a childhood best friend riding in the car and sharing memories with me as we travel from Memphis to a hospital in Jackson, MS.

The kingdom of heaven is like an OR nurse's name being Dawn.

The kingdom of heaven is like crying with my dad as we watch my mom be wheeled into surgery to treat her cancer.

The kingdom of heaven is like my mom's steadfast humor and faithful joy – a smile and laugh that creates a home and a feast.

The kingdom of heaven – hidden and revealed – in a shawl, a friend, a name, shared tears and shared laughter.

What is the kingdom of heaven like for you?

What treasures new and old will you bring out from your life?

And with those treasures, what collage will you create that proclaims and reveals what has been hidden since the foundation of the world?

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a Creator pulling, sorting, shifting, placing, arranging, re-arranging, cutting, tearing, gluing – placing before us images of incarnate Love – Spirit-breathed treasures for which we sell all that we have – Spirit-breathed treasures that catch us and draw us ashore to a feast that nourishes our souls.