



SUNDAY 26 JULY 2026

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

17th Sunday of the year (A) - Matthew 13: 44-52

Do you want to get rich? the article said. Then the first thing to do is to clear out all your drawers and cupboards at home. Sounds strange? The message goes on to indicate that our minds are our lives are cluttered up and the passion that is needed to generate the graft that will produce riches comes from undistracted intentions, clear focus and wholehearted application in the pursuit of your goal. It's not easy. I'm not rich.

This is the third Sunday we've been listening to Gospel passages about the parables of the kingdom - some of Jesus' favourite stories. He throws out a number of pictures to us - a sower, a mustard seed, wheat and weeds, yeast, treasure, pearls, a fishing net, and there probably were others not recorded. Matthew gathers this bunch together and piles them one on top of the other for us. One story won't do. Stack them up in the hope that multiple images might get through to us and we get the message - we're meant to develop spiritually. But it takes thought, effort, deliberate choices and action. We don't become kingdom-living disciples by freewheeling, daydreaming or assuming we're OK really without doing anything more definite.

Greater understanding of Jesus' teaching, time given to becoming more familiar with God's word in the Scriptures and some inspiring reading or conversations have been standard paths to integrating the Lord's teaching into our busy lives. It helps to add companionship to keep up the pace. Any initial grasp of our personal spiritual journey means we're on the road to maturing in an extraordinary adventure though it doesn't feel like it. It's a process, requires time and some regularity. We give notional assent to a lot of things we read and we hear in church. The active follow through with any consistency can often be the problem. Progress is not smooth and we live with a level of discouragement when failures and distractions leave gaps in our efforts and a loss of momentum.

The parables want to keep us on track. Securing the treasure in the field or the pearl of great value require selling everything else. What have we done that is comparable - giving up so much to gain something we hold dear? In devoting more time and thought to kingdom pursuits, decisions are needed about what we surrender in the process. Is it TV, social media, the phone, YouTube? Is it the company we keep, the work or personal values that may need to be questioned? New companions, even unexpected ones may arise in reinventing ourselves through a kingdom outlook of love, justice and honesty.

Choices don't come easy when we've already stripped things back just to survive. But be at home with our own contradictions. Life is not a well-rounded symphony that always makes sense. Solomon asked for wisdom. We might well do the same.



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It is individuals that matter, each and every person, together with their families. Social movements, communal ideologies and grand political proclamations in favour of a population are worthless unless they lead to a flourishing of persons - men and women - with their inalienable rights. Similarly, it is not enough to extol individual freedom or private enterprise if we then allow a multitude of people to continue living without decent work, protections or access to basic necessities.

Recognising that every man and woman possesses an inalienable dignity, together with rights that no human power can betray or nullify, requires us to shape the way we live together, including our economic and political choices, and the makeup of our cities. From this arises the first major principle of Social Doctrine that I wish to highlight: the common good. We can describe it as the social expression of the dignity recognised in every person. When Benedict XVI referred to the non-negotiable values that the Church must always defend, he included among them "the promotion of the common good." For a Christian, going beyond the narrow confines of one's own interests and committing oneself, within the limits of one's ability, to the common good is a non-negotiable value, as is the promotion of life.

Magnifica Humanitas paras 58 and 59