

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COMPASS, PA

July 26, 2026 – PENTECOST 9 / PROPER 12A

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Homily: “*Small Beginnings—Eternal Glory*”

1 Kings 3:5-12	(King Solomon asks God for wisdom, not riches)
Psalms 119:129-136	(Praise for God's law and a plea for grace to keep it)
Romans 8:26-39	(The Holy Spirit intercedes for, and within, us)
St. Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52	(Jesus offers parables about the Kingdom of God)

In today's Gospel, Jesus offers us a series of brief parables, each one like a window opening onto the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven. At first glance they seem unrelated—a mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, a priceless pearl, a fishing net, and finally a householder bringing out treasures both old and new. Yet together they answer one fundamental question: *What is God's Kingdom really like?*

The first two parables teach us that the Kingdom often begins in ways so small they are easily overlooked. A mustard seed is tiny. A pinch of yeast disappears into the flour. Neither seems particularly impressive. Yet both possess the extraordinary power to transform.

We live in a culture that celebrates what is big, immediate, and spectacular. We measure success by numbers, influence, and visibility. God's way is often quite different. God delights in beginning with what seems insignificant.

It is worth remembering that the Church itself began as something very small. A handful of frightened disciples gathered behind locked doors hardly looked like the beginning of a lasting movement that would span centuries and continents. Yet here we are today, still gathering for Word and Sacrament, still proclaiming Christ's resurrection, still witnessing to God's love. The mustard seed continues to grow; the yeast continues to increase God's work among us.

So it is with every deed of kindness, every prayer whispered in faith, every word of forgiveness, every visit to someone who is sick or lonely. These acts may seem small, but in God's Kingdom they possess remarkable power.

The next two parables shift our attention from the Kingdom's hidden beginnings to its incomparable value. A man discovers treasure hidden in a field. A merchant finds a pearl of extraordinary worth. Both immediately recognize that what they have found is worth more than everything else they own. Notice something important. Neither complains about the cost of purchasing this treasure. They sell everything *joyfully* in order to acquire it. When we have truly found that which is priceless—our relationship with God in Christ—sacrifice no longer feels like a burden but a privilege. Or, when at times we cannot escape feeling burdened, we at least know our sacrifice is worthwhile.

A man once cleaned out his attic and found an old violin. He thought about taking it to a thrift store, but a friend urged him to have it appraised. It turned out to be a rare instrument *worth more than his huge, expensive house*. Something forgotten, dusty, overlooked—suddenly revealed as priceless.

The Kingdom is like that: we may have grown accustomed to God's abundant grace, but it is worth more than everything we own. Just so, many will pass by Christ without recognizing Who is before them. Others discover in Him the greatest treasure imaginable—a relationship with the living God that surpasses wealth, success, or security.

In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges us to ask ourselves an uncomfortable but necessary question: *What do I value most in my life?* We say Christ is first, but our calendars, our bank statements, our anxieties, and our priorities often tell another story. The Gospel invites us to examine whether our lives reflect the value we profess. The Kingdom is not about surrendering ourselves or our possessions for the sake of giving them up. It is about discovering something so incredibly wonderful that beside it, everything else finds its proper place.

Finally comes the parable of the fishing net. It reminds us that God's Kingdom is blessedly inclusive—it gathers fish of every kind. But it also reminds us that God desires our transformation. God's grace welcomes us just as we are, but His grace never intends to leave us there. The Christian life is one of continual conversion, of allowing God's Spirit to shape us more fully into the likeness of Christ.

The final image Jesus offers is one that speaks especially to the Church. "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." That is a beautiful description of our Anglican tradition. We cherish the ancient faith handed down through Scripture, the Creeds, and the Sacraments. We pray words that have formed the faith of Christians for generations. Yet we do not preserve them simply as museum pieces. The Holy Spirit continually makes ancient truth fresh for every generation. Our *Book of Common Prayer* reminds us that worship is not merely remembering what God once did. It is participating in what God is doing now. Every Eucharist is both old and new. We hear ancient words. We receive everlasting grace. And we are sent into today's world to live as citizens of God's Kingdom.

So perhaps the question Jesus' parables leave with us is this: Where will we see the Kingdom this coming week? Perhaps in kindness to (or from) a stranger. Or, in a loaf of bread shared with a neighbor. In forgiveness offered after a long silence. In a visit to someone who is lonely or despondent. In quiet faithfulness when no one else notices. These may seem like tiny mustard seeds. But that is exactly how God so often works.

Moreover, each time we come to this Holy Table, we are reminded that God's greatest gift came into the world in humility: born in a stable, living among ordinary people, dying upon a rough wooden cross, and then rising to new life.

The Kingdom is growing among us, often unseen. If our treasure is truly Jesus Christ, then even the smallest act of faith matters. Every prayer, every kindness, every sacrifice offered in love becomes another mustard seed planted in God's Kingdom. And that Kingdom, though often hidden today, is already growing among us—and one day it will be revealed in all its glory.

May the Lord give us eyes to recognize the treasure God has given us in Christ, courage to choose that relationship above all else, patience to become part of His quiet, transforming work, and faith to plant even the smallest seeds that will bear fruit for eternity.

Let us pray:

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we come before You with hearts filled with awe, affirming Your supreme rule over all creation. Forgive us for the times we get so caught up in the noise of this world that we miss the quiet, powerful ways Your Kingdom is at work around us. Open our eyes to recognize Your Kingdom among us. Grant us the wisdom to discern where Your grace, mercy, and truth are breaking through the chaos of daily life. Align our desires with Yours. Give us the courage and the grace to be active participants in building Your Kingdom here on earth. May Your justice, love, and peace be reflected in our relationships, church, and community. Help us to seek Your kingdom and Your righteousness above all else, trusting that You will provide for every need along the way. *Amen.**

* Adapt. L. David Harris, "Your Daily Portion," 4 February 2026, [For Thine is the Kingdom](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4QwmcUHZkY&t=110s), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4QwmcUHZkY&t=110s>> 21 July 2026; "Prayers for Wisdom to Discern God's Kingdom" 2026, [Methodist.org](https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/prayers/prayer-for-wisdom-to-discern-signs-of-gods-kingdom/) <<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/prayers/prayer-for-wisdom-to-discern-signs-of-gods-kingdom/>> 21 July 2026; Jessica Van Roekel, "A Prayer for When You Need to Seek God," 24 September 2019, [Welcome Grace](https://welcomegrace.com/2019/09/a-prayer-for-when-you-need-to-seek-god/) <<https://welcomegrace.com/2019/09/a-prayer-for-when-you-need-to-seek-god/>> 21 July 2026.