

A grab bag

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Matthew 13:31-33. 44-52

If a flood was coming your way and you had to evacuate your house, what would you save? Some police forces recommend keeping a packed "grab bag" with useful stuff in it – torches, basic food, medicines, and so on, but few of us are that organised. So what would you grab? Photos? Documents? Jewellery? Your phone?

In today's Gospel reading Jesus explores the value of things. The kingdom of heaven, he says, often seems really small, but actually it is the most precious thing in the world. It is like a buried treasure for which it is worth sacrificing everything else. It is like a single pearl that a collector would give all their wealth to buy. It is like yeast in bread dough. It is hidden, almost invisible, and yet it is the very core of our existence, the essence of the universe.

We cannot put the kingdom of heaven in our grab bag. We do not need to, because it lives inside and all around us. We can look for its signs, and nurture them until the tiny seed of the kingdom of heaven grows into the magnificent tree in whose shade we will sit and eat with our creator. ☺

Give us wisdom, O Lord, to know where our true treasure lies, and there to set our hearts; that we may see the signs of your kingdom in the world and play our part in nurturing them, until the whole world acknowledges you as creator and king. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

This afternoon a fox took one of our ducklings and I am distraught. The little flock of thirteen is now reduced to twelve and they are all anxious as am I. Common sense tells me every creature needs to eat – the human, the duck, the fox – and yet the loss is about it being too soon, too rough, too sad.

I think this is proper grief just like the other griefs we all experience.

My mind and heart are not in the same place – in the first place I'm rational, trying to be calm, but in the second place it hurts and rages. Where is God in the smallholding now?

That's a proper question and it's the question in the face of all tragedy – where are you? There's no trite answer, just a longing for the comfort of God's presence in this farmyard, in this place, among these creatures and me. ☺

“If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink”

Proverbs 25:21



Walking with Rosie

Chips and ice cream

by Gillian Cooper

The school holidays are in full swing, and Rosie and I join the Butlins crowds on the promenade (NO DOGS on the beach in August). The cafes and food stalls are busy. We could have ice creams (oh yes! Says Rosie), chips, burgers, cream teas, even candy floss. Food is an essential part of the holiday fun, especially food we would not eat any other time (apart from ice

cream, says Rosie, we need that every day).

There is special food in the story of our life with God. The fruit of knowledge, the Passover lamb, the manna in the wilderness, the milk and honey of the promised land. And Jesus' Last Supper, a solemn reminder of past salvation and foretaste of salvation to come. One day, we are promised, we will enjoy the best and most exciting food of all, at God's table (yes, Rosie, I am sure there will be ice cream). ☺