

Saint_Thomas_Explains_the_Gospel_for_the_6th_Sunday_after_Epiphany

Another parable he proposed unto them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof. Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes: and without parables he did not speak to them. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.

CHRYS; Seeing the Lord had said above that three parts of the seed perish, and one only is preserved, and of that one part there is much loss by reason of the tares that are sown upon it; that none might say, Who then and how many shall they be that believe; He removes this cause of fear by the parable of the mustard seed: therefore it is said, Another parable put he forth to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.

JEROME; The kingdom of heaven is the preaching of the Gospel, and the knowledge of the Scriptures which leads to life, concerning which it is said to the Jews, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you. It is the kingdom of heaven thus understood which is likened to a grain of mustard seed.

AUG; A grain of mustard seed may allude to the warmth of faith, or to its property as antidote to poison. It follows; Which a man took and sowed in his field.

JEROME; The man who sows is by most understood to be the Savior, who sows the seed in the minds of believers; by others the man himself, who sows in his field, that is, in his own heart. Who indeed is he that sows, but our own mind and understanding, which receiving the grain of preaching, and nurturing it by the dew of faith, makes it to spring up in the field of our own breast? Which is the least of all seeds. The Gospel preaching is the least of all the systems of the schools; at first view it has not even the appearance of truth, announcing a man as God, God put to death, and proclaiming the offense of the cross. Compare this teaching with the dogmas of the Philosophers, with their books, the splendor of their eloquence, the polish of their style, and you will see how the seed of the Gospel is the least of all seeds.

CHRYS; Or, the seed of the Gospel is the least of seeds, because the disciples were weaker than the whole of mankind; yet forasmuch as there was great might in them, their preaching spread throughout the whole world, and therefore it follows, But when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, that is among dogmas.

AUG; Dogmas are the decisions of sects, the points, that is, that they have determined.

JEROME; For the dogmas of Philosophers when set they have grown up, show nothing of life or strength, but watery and insipid they grow into grasses and other greens, which quickly dry up and wither away. But the Gospel preaching, though it seem small in its

beginning, when sown in the mind of the hearer, or upon the world, comes up not a garden herb, but a tree, so that the birds of the air (which we must suppose to be either the souls of believers or the Powers of God set free from slavery) come and abide in its branches. The branches of the Gospel tree which have grown of the grain of mustard seed, I suppose to signify the various dogmas in which each of the birds (as explained above) takes his rest. Let us then take the wings of the dove, that flying aloft we may dwell in the branches of this tree, and may make ourselves nests of doctrines, and soaring Or you earthly things may hasten towards heavenly.

HILARY; Or, the Lord compares Himself to a grain of mustard seed, sharp to the taste, and the least of all seeds, whose strength is extracted by bruising.

GREG; Christ Himself is the grain of mustard seed, who, planted in the garden of the sepulcher, grew up a great tree; He was a grain of seed when He died and a tree when He rose again; a grain of seed in the humiliation of the flesh, a tree in the power of His majesty.

HILARY; This grain then when sown in the field, that is when seized by the people and delivered to death, and as it were buried in the ground by a sowing of the body, grew up beyond the size of all herbs, and exceeded all the glory of the Prophets. For the preaching of the Prophets was allowed as it were herbs to a sick man; but now the birds of the air lodge in the branches of the tree. By which we understand the Apostles, who put forth of Christ's might, and overshadowing the world with their boughs, are a tree to which the Gentiles flee in hope of life, and having been long tossed by the winds, that is by the spirits of the Devil, may have rest in its branches.

GREG; The birds lodge in its branches, when holy souls that raise themselves aloft from thoughts of earth on the wings of the virtues, breathe again from the troubles of this life in their words and comforting.

CHRYS; The same thing the Lord sets forth in this parable of the leaven; as much as to say to His disciples, As leaven changes into its own kind much wheat flour, so shall you change the whole world. Note here the wisdom of the Savior; He first brings instances from nature proving that as the one is possible so is the other. And He says not simply 'put,' but hid; as much as to say, So you, when you shall be cast down by your enemies, then you shall overcome them. And so leaven is kneaded in, without being destroyed, but gradually changes all things into its own nature; so shall it come to pass with your preaching. Fear you not then because I said that many tribulations shall come upon you, for so shall you shine forth, and shall overcome them all. He says, three measures, to signify a great abundance; that definite number standing for an indefinite quantity.

JEROME; The 'satum' is a kind of measure in use in Palestine containing one modius and a half.

AUG; Or, the leaven signifies love, because it causes activity and fermentation; by the woman He means wisdom. By the three measures He intends either those three things in man, with the whole heart, with the whole soul, with the whole mind; or the three degrees of fruitfulness, the hundred-fold, the sixty-fold, the thirty-fold; or those three kinds of men, Noah, Daniel, and Job.

RABAN; He says, Until the whole was leavened, because that love implanted in our mind ought to grow until it changes the whole soul into its own perfection; which is begun here, but is completed hereafter.

JEROME; Or otherwise, the woman who takes the leaven and hides it, seems to me to be the Apostolic preaching, or the Church gathered out of diverse nations. She takes the leaven, that is, the understanding of the Scriptures, and hides it in three measures of meal, that the three, spirit, soul, and body, may be brought into one, and may not differ among themselves. Or otherwise, we read in Plato that there are three parts in the soul - reason, anger, and desire - so we also if we have received the evangelic leaven of Holy Scripture, may possess in our reason prudence, in our anger hatred against vice, in our desire love of the virtues, and this will all come to pass by the Evangelic teaching which our mother Church has held out to us. I will further mention an interpretation of some; that the woman is the Church, who has mingled the faith of man in three measures of meal, namely, belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; which when it has fermented into one lump, brings us not to a threefold God, but to the knowledge of one Divinity. This is a pious interpretation; but parables and doubtful solutions of dark things can never bestow authority on dogmas.

HILARY; Or otherwise, the Lord compares Himself to leaven; for leaven is produced from meal, and communicates the power that it has received to heap of its own kind. The woman, that is the Synagogue, taking this leaven hides it, that is by the sentence of death; but it working in the three measures of meal, that is equally in the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels, makes all one; so that what the Law ordains, the Prophets announce, that is fulfilled in the developments of the Gospels. But many, as I remember, have thought that the three measures refer to the calling of the three nations, out of Shem, Ham, and Japhet. But I hardly think that the reason of the thing will allow this interpretation; for though these three nations have indeed been called, yet in them Christ is shown and not hidden, and in so great a multitude of unbelievers the whole cannot be said to be leavened.

CHRYS; After the foregoing parables, that none might think that Christ was bringing forward anything new, the Evangelist quotes the Prophet, foretelling even this His manner of preaching: Mark's words are, And with many such parables He spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it (Mark 4:33). So marvel not that, in speaking of the kingdom, He uses the similitudes of a seed, and of leaven for He was discoursing to common men, and who needed to be led forward by such aids.

REMIG; The Greek word 'Parable,' is rendered in Latin 'Similitude,' by which truth is explained; and an image or representation of the reality is set forth.

JEROME; Yet He spoke not in parables to the disciples, but to the multitude; and even to this day the multitude hears in parables; and therefore it is said, And without a parable He did not speak to them.

CHRYS; For though He had spoken many things not in parables, when not speaking before the multitudes, yet at this time He spoke nothing without a parable.

AUG; Or, this is said, not that He uttered nothing in plain words; but that He concluded no one discourse without introducing a parable in the course of it, though the chief part of

the discourse might consist of matter not figurative. And we may indeed find discourses of His parabolic throughout, but none direct throughout. And by a complete discourse, I mean, the whole of what He says on any topic that may be brought before Him by circumstances, before He leaves it and passes to a new subject. For sometimes one Evangelist connects what another gives as spoken at different times; the writer having in such a case followed not the order of events, but the order of connection in his own memory.

The reason why He spoke in parables the Evangelist subjoins, saying, That it might be fulfilled that was spoken by the Prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.

JEROME; This passage is taken from the seventy-seventh Psalm. I have seen copies which read, 'by Esaias the Prophet,' instead of what we have adopted, and what the common text has by the Prophet?

REMIG; From which reading Porphyry took an objection to the believers; Such was your Evangelist's ignorance, that he imputed to Isaiah what is indeed found in the Psalms.

JEROME; But because the text was not found in Isaiah, his name was, I suppose, therefore erased by such as had observed that. But it seems to me that it was first written thus, 'As was written by Asaph the Prophet, saying'; for the seventy-seventh Psalm out of which this text is taken is ascribed to Asaph the Prophet; and that the copyist not understanding Asaph, and imputing it to error in the transcription, substituted the better known name Isaiah. For it should be known that not David only, but those others also whose names are set before the Psalms, and hymns and songs of God, are to be considered prophets, namely, Asaph, Idithum, and Heman the Esraite, and the rest who are named in Scripture. And so that which is spoken in the Lord's person, I will open my mouth in parables, if considered attentively, will be found to be a description of the departure of Israel out of Egypt, and a relation of all the wonders contained in the history of Exodus. By which we learn, that all that is there written may be taken in a figurative way, and contains hidden sacraments; for this what the Savior is there made to preface by the words, I will open my mouth in parables.

GLOSS; As though He had said, I who spoke before by the Prophets, now in My own person will open My mouth in parables, and will bring forth out of My secret store mysteries which have been hidden ever since the foundation of the world.

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