

### Trinity 8 2008 Walkhampton

When Jesus spoke to people he did not use religious language. He used stories to make his point and his illustrations were drawn from every day life so everyone could make connexions with what he was saying. He talked of wheat and weeds, the trials of the sower who we heard about this morning. He knew that not all his seed would flourish and he used it as a picture of those who were listening to his message. In another example of his stories we find Jesus speaking of the trials of family life with a younger son wandering off to squander his inheritance. He described people's religious experience in terms of lost coins, or preparations for a marriage feast or of someone who let out his vineyard. Sheep that went astray all the time were often used as a way into telling people what his kingly rule would be like.

So if Jesus was teaching today I have no doubt that he would be talking about computers, motor cars, and things that we experience in our daily lives as a way of making connexions between the ordinary and the extraordinary; to point people to God and to make us think what is really important in our lives. I don't think Jesus would get in a boat today to deliver his teaching. He'd drive straight to Tesco's car park and maybe talk to his listeners about the things that dominate their lives as they lent on their shopping trolleys, perhaps something like this:

A family went out to go to a large superstore one Sunday morning as a treat because they had spent the rest of the week working so hard to pay the mortgage which was five times Mum & Dad's joint salary. This was the only time they could see each other as a family such was their pace of life. Dad drove the large family car to the superstore filling station and filled up with bio-diesel and then the family went into the store to buy their food and to experience some retail therapy. It was like a religious experience going to this

retail cathedral because it catered for their every need. However, the family were shocked when they entered the superstore to find the shelves were empty of food and so they demanded to know why the superstore had let them down by not having the shelves stocked full of food to buy on this their special day out. The manager was called to give an explanation as the family were now threatening legal action because their human rights had been infringed because they were not being allowed to experience the fullness of retail therapy they desired and which was their right to have! Where was the food? Why was it not available for immediate credit card purchase and consumption? What sort of retail temple was this?

The manager looked crestfallen. "We have no food because all our farmers have given up growing food and are growing bio-fuel crops instead."

The family were shocked. The superstore must be to blame for this. They should do something about this immediately!

The manager spoke up, "I can do you a very good PC at a very competitive price or perhaps you would like the latest ipod or HD TV which has just come in? It's what our customers want and we are a customer led business."

"But we can't eat these gadgets", protested Mum.

"Ah! but they may take your mind off your hunger pangs if you play the latest computer game on this X-Box or view the latest digital offering on HD TV – a reality game show in which contestants try to outdo each other in being the greediest and most selfish contestant. The judging panel are fantastic. They really stick the boot into the contestants and make them look incredibly stupid. It's so affirming of our lifestyle."

"But how did you allow this to happen?" asked Dad.

“It’s not us,” replied the manager, “we respond to what our customers want and they didn’t want us to sell food but rather all these other great items which our customers tell us are essentials for modern living”.

So the family left the superstore carrying a Flat Screen HD ready TV which the manager assured them would solve all their problems and mean that they would find happiness as a family at least until the next, new improved, model was introduced next week. Their physical hunger would only be matched by their spiritual starvation, one of which they were aware of, the other of which they were totally blind to.

And the crowd listened and laughed at the story because they thought it was about someone else. They pushed their trolleys into the superstore but stopped just for a second as they entered to check that the shelves were full of food. They had no intention of going hungry. They knew what they needed to make them happy and fulfilled – just another TV dinner –that will do nicely.

And his followers asked Him what he meant by this story as they had no idea what he was talking about so he said to them,

“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”<sup>1</sup>

But still they did not have a clue what he was talking about so he spelt it out to them word by word, syllable by syllable, until he was blue in the face. And then one of them, Simon Peter, piped up, “So you are the Son of the Living God, the Messiah, the chosen one”.

And Jesus said, “Well done! You’ve finally got it but are you going to do anything about it?”

And Peter replied, “We’ll be right with you Jesus, just as soon as we’ve filled up this trolley. They’ve got some great bargains today”.

Jesus wept.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 13.10-17