

Once again – as he did in last week’s gospel – Jesus speaks about the kingdom of God as something buried, hidden, a pearl waiting to be found, a seed in growing in the earth. We saw last week that the kingdom is never ‘out there’ – or even worse, ‘up there’. He also told us that when someone comes along and says: ‘Look, the kingdom is there!’ or ‘Here is the kingdom!’ we are not to believe them. He tells us that the kingdom of God is within us.

One of the most endangered species on our planet today, the musk deer is known for producing the most expensive scent in the world, also known as Kasturi in Ayurveda. The scent is produced in a small pouch known as a musk pod, which is what makes it extremely valuable commercially. The deer itself is so enchanted by this fragrance, it often roams for miles to discover the source of it, not realising that the source is within itself.

We are that deer. We run here and there looking for the kingdom of God, when all the time it is within us. The kingdom of God isn’t a place to be reached or the end of a journey and we don’t have to travel anywhere to find it. And despite the second reading from St Paul, the kingdom of God isn’t reserved for a chosen elite. How could it be? The kingdom of God is within all of us: we just have to let it be born – and we do that by moving ourselves out of the way: ‘Let go, little drop, and you will find yourself not a drop in the ocean, but the ocean in a drop.’ Jesus himself said: ‘He who would save his life must lose it.’

One of the most lovely and personal sayings of Jesus is this:

‘Come to me, all you who labour and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.’

What’s the heaviest burden we carry? Ourselves. Jesus would give us rest from being ourselves. There is an old story told among the mystics that a man once found himself outside the door of the kingdom and knocked to be let in. ‘Who’s there?’ a voice asked. ‘Me,’ the man said, and the voice told him to go away. He came back some time later and the same thing happened: ‘Who’s there?’ ‘Me’, ‘Go away.’ The man went away and thought about things for a long time, then he came back and knocked on the door again. When the voice asked: ‘Who’s there?’ the man replied: ‘You, O Lord.’ And the door immediately opened to let him in.