

The parable of the dragnet is not one of the most popular of our Lord's stories. Perhaps this is because of Matthew's perennial urge to end in a bonfire (I can't imagine sorting fishermen bothering to set fire to *the fish that are no good*; surely the natural thing is to chuck 'em back into the sea).

But perhaps the story deserves our attention for that very reason. *The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds.* The Kingdom, note: God's kingdom *brings in all kinds.* This fact alone is worth our consideration.

We constantly experience the urge to edit the Kingdom according to our own tastes and predilections. We spend ages being affronted with the different kinds who meet us in the net, and even with God, for allowing this to happen. Our small minds are full of hooks and blades, which impede and damage the work of God.

We should remind ourselves that we too are part of the catch; we too are destined for the judgment of God. It doesn't matter if we turn up looking good in our own eyes. If we haven't fulfilled what God wants of us, we have failed; and the will of God for us is hardly ever exactly what we should like for ourselves.

We can extend this thought further, and admit that we are too ready to decide that God make mistakes with the content of our personal life. We find our harvest deficient; we decide that we have experienced what we did not want to experience, and we have not experienced what we wanted to experience, and there is no health in us.

Trusting in God doesn't just mean a vague notion that he can sort out the mess of the world. It means believing that the mess of the world -and our own little mess -is actually part of his plan. Even if a fish in a net feels he has lost his destiny as a free-living fish, it means that he has a higher purpose which has never even occurred to his fishy thought.

The distance between me and a fish looks great to me. But it's nothing compared to the distance between me and the unsearchable wisdom of God. So let us find peace in this parable: all is for a good purpose; and let us even find peace in Matthew's bonfire, which promises us that all afflictions and disorders will be eliminated at last, and God will be all in all.