

Sunday, 30 July 2017

The surpassing treasure of God's kingdom**Reading 1:** 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12**Responsorial Psalm:**

Ps 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130

Reading 2: Romans 8:28-30**Gospel** :

Matthew 13:44-52

Gospel Reading: Matt 13:44-52

Jesus said to the crowds, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. "Have you understood all this?" They said to him, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Meditation: What do you treasure the most and how do you keep it from being lost or stolen? In a peasant community the best safe was often the earth. The man in the parable (Matthew 13:44) "went in his joy" to sell everything. Why? Because he found a treasure worth possessing above all else he had. He did not, however, have enough to buy the treasure. Fortunately, he only needed enough to buy the field. In a similar fashion, God offers his kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17) as incomparable treasure at a price we can afford! We can't pay the full price for the life which God gives us; but when we exchange our life for the life which God offers, we receive a treasure beyond compare.

When we discover the kingdom of God we receive the greatest possible treasure - the Lord himself. Selling all that we have to obtain this incomparable treasure could mean many things - our friends, job, our "style of life", what we do with our free time. Treasure has a special connection to the heart, the place of desire and longing, the place of will and focus. The thing we most set our heart on is our highest treasure. In this parable what does the treasure of the kingdom refer to? It certainly refers to the kingdom of God in all its aspects. But in a special way, the Lord himself is the treasure we seek for. *If the Almighty is your gold and your precious silver, then you will delight yourself in the Almighty (Job 22:22- 23).* Is the Lord the treasure and delight of your heart?

When Jesus had finished speaking about his parables, he turned to his disciples and asked them, "Have you understood all this?" (Matthew 13:52). Jesus asks us the same question. If we want to understand the meaning and significance of the parables for our daily lives, then we must reflect and think through what the Lord is saying to us through his instruction.

Why does Jesus compare a "trained scribe" with a "householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Matthew 13:52)? Some people love to store up old prized possessions along with their newly acquired prizes. Others are eager to get rid of the old to make room for the new. So why does Jesus seem to emphasize keeping the old along with the new? Why not replace the old, especially if the new seems to be better or more useful? Wouldn't a person want to throw away an old pair of shoes and replace them with a new pair - especially if the old pair became well-worn or torn beyond repair? But, who in his right mind would throw away an old precious jewel or some old gold coins simply because they were ancient and maybe tarnished a bit? Precious gems and gold do not lose their value with age!

Like choice vintage wine they increase in value. Jesus' parable of the "old" and the "new" certainly points to the "older covenants" which God made with his covenanted people of the Old Testament, beginning with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with Moses on Mount Sinai, and with King David the precursor of the Messiah. Jesus' parable also points to the "new covenant" which he came to establish through the shedding of his blood on the cross and the anointing of his Holy Spirit who seals the new covenant on the day of Pentecost. Jesus did not come to abolish the Old Covenant but to fulfill it. The Lord calls us to treasure all of his word - all of his commandments, promises, precepts, and teaching. Do you promise to keep all of God's commands? The Lord gives strength, blessing, and joy to those who treasure all of his word.

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. What are your treasures?
2. Which of God's commandments do we find most difficult to keep?
3. What can we do to live within these commandments?

"Lord Jesus, may your word take deep root in my heart and transform my way of thinking, discerning, and acting. May your Spirit open my ears to hear and understand the word of God in the Scriptures that I may revere and treasure both the Old and the New Testaments which God has prepared for all who desire to enter his kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. Help me to be a diligent student and faithful disciple of your word."