

The Kingdom of heaven: "The treasure of Infinite Value"

At least some of you may know that our parish leadership these days is working hard to find the right replacement for our staff, planning to retire or move out. As you may well understand, finding the right replacement in a short time is never easy, especially in parish staff hiring. We were praying in our petitions on Sunday for these intentions, and I was praying to God more these days for the wisdom and understanding to minister and serve better our community.

In our first reading we heard, God telling Solomon, "Ask me something, and I will give it to you". Solomon asked for the wisdom and understanding to govern his people, and God gave it to him abundantly. But we know, this is not always the case. There can be delay in God responding to us or making changes to His plan. Then what do we do about it?

You may observe that the chapter 13 of Mathew's gospel is about parables of the Kingdom. We find many of them there, starting with the 'seed and Sower', the "the seed and weeds", 'mustard seed and Yeast', 'pearl and treasure' etc. What do we understand by "the kingdom of heaven". Is this the place that we are able to go to when we die? Is this the place where God the Father rules with his Son and the Spirit. Is it a place at all?

The Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx O.P., says that the term used in Matthew's Gospel refers to "a process, a course of events, whereby God begins to govern or to act as Lord, an action, therefore, by which God manifests his being-God in the world of men and women. I think what he is saying is that, first of all, the kingdom of heaven is a process that has begun and is continuing to happen. It is not a place away from us – it is where we are at any given time. It is where we live and where we live after death. What do you treasure the most and how do you keep it from being lost or stolen? In a community of farmers, the safest was often the earth. The man in the parable, "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 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.

What is this treasure which Jesus offers so freely and graciously? It is the **treasure of God himself** - the source and giver of every good gift and blessing in this life - and a kingdom that will endure forever. God offers us the treasure of unending joy and friendship with himself and with all who are united with him in his heavenly Kingdom. The inheritance that awaits us is *imperishable, and unfading*. Paul describes it as a state of everlasting peace, joy, and righteousness in the Holy Spirit.

How realistic and attainable is this heavenly treasure? Can we enjoy it now, or must we wait for it in the after-life? The treasure of God's kingdom is both *a present and a future reality* - like an investment which grows and matures, ever increasing and multiplying in value, and producing an endless supply of rich rewards and benefits. Sometimes finding a parish staff is like finding a treasure, and that may be hidden that we need to discover and obtain it. It may take time and sacrifice, and God is asking us to be patient, and keep trusting in Him. This is what we read in our 2nd reading: "we know that all things work for good for those who love God". (add)

How instinctively we direct our energies and resources towards that which we most value. To set one's heart on heavenly treasure, *is to enter into a deeper and richer life with God himself*. It is only by letting go of false treasure, that we can enter into the joy of a heavenly treasure that is worth more than whatever we possess or we can give in exchange. Amen.

