



LIVING THE GOSPEL

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 26th, 2026

Theme: "Have you understood all this?"

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: O God, protector of those who hope in you, without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy, bestow in abundance your mercy upon us and grant that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may use the good things that pass in such a way as to hold fast even now to those that ever endure. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:44-52

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field. ⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; ⁴⁶ when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings ⁴⁸ in a haul of all kinds. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are no use. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just ⁵⁰ to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. "Have you understood all this?" They said, "Yes." ⁵¹ And he said to them, ⁵² "Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.

Gospel Focus

Today's gospel rounds out the discourse in parables, and these last few are only for the disciples. Jesus gives the disciples three parables in a row, asks them, "Did you get all that?" and then give them another one for good measure. The disciples might have understood these parables in a brief while, but for us today these images can be a source of countless hours of prayer, reflection, and integration into our lives. In both the parable of the pearl of great price and the parable of the buried treasure, a person comes across something of value and gives all that he has to chase after it. The focus of both parables is on the individual's respond to the discovery of the kingdom, whether looking for it or not. Each is overjoyed by the discovery, but neither is satisfied with than, both sell everything in search of the kingdom.

Gospel Reflection

What would make you most happy? Is happiness something to be sought or does it find you?

Today's gospel offers three short parables about how one attains not only happiness but the even deeper gift of lasting joy. In the first instance, a person unexpectedly finds buried treasure. Perhaps he is digging a well or a hole for a fence post, when suddenly he strikes a hoard of coins left behind by a previous owner who, for some reason, was unable to reclaim it. The digger is likely a poor person, a hired day worker, at the bottom of the social scale. The parable emphasizes how overjoyed he is over this unexpected find that will change his life. With reckless abandon he sells all he has in order to acquire the field with its treasure.

The second parable takes us to the other end of the social spectrum. A merchant in search of fine pearls would have been a rich man, most likely making his money on the backs of the poor divers in his employ. Merchants are generally depicted negatively in the Scriptures (see example, Sir 26:29, Isa 23:8; Ezek 27), as avaricious and corrupt. The surprise is that even such persons as this could come upon the reign of God and be moved to sell all they have for this pearl of great price.

If there is discomfort among the hearers of Jesus' parables that both a poor peasant and a rich merchant could be found in the reign of God, a third parable—about a net that pulls in all kinds of fish—asks disciples to suspend judgment about who is wicked and who is righteous, leaving the sorting to God's angels at the end of age. There are many verbal and thematic similarities here to the parable of the weeds and wheat (Matt 13:24-30, 36:43). The parable is also evocative to the call of the first disciples to be fishers of people, for many of which they abandon all else (Matt 4:18-20).

There is an element of surprise in each parable, whether concerning the manner of finding who is to be found in God's reign. A further surprise is that the resultant joy leads to giving up all else. It is a paradoxical path to happiness. When it finds you, any instinct to hoard this treasure evaporates; what surfaces instead is the desire to divest oneself of everything.

The metaphors of the treasure and pearl break down, however, when they imply the reign of God can be brought and owned. The startling message Jesus preaches is that happiness in God's reign cannot be purchased in any way—not by good deed, nor with any commodity. Rather, it is an astonishing free gift, attainable by all. While it cannot be bought, it costs everything. The price is not paid out of obligation or guilt but it is a totally free self-surrender to irresistible joy. This is an old story, not to be kept locked in a storeroom, but meant to be told anew, by each who has been set free by joy.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

⁵ At Gibeon Yahweh appeared in a dream to Solomon during the night. God said, "Ask what you would like me to give you."⁷ Now, Yahweh my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. ⁸ Your servant finds himself in the midst of this people of yours that you have chosen, a people so many its number cannot be counted or reckoned. ⁹ Give your servant a heart to understand to how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great?" ¹⁰ It pleased Yahweh that Solomon should have asked for this. ¹¹ "Since you have asked for this," Yahweh said, "and not asked for long life for yourself or riches or the lives of your enemies, but have asked for a discerning judgment for yourself, ¹² here and now I do what you ask.

Responsorial Reading —Psalms 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130

R: Lord, I love your commands.

I have said, O Lord, that my part is to keep your words.
The law of your mouth is to me more precious
than thousands of gold and silver pieces. **(R)**

For I love your commands more than gold, however fine.
For in all your precepts I go forward;
every false way I hate. **(R)**

Wonderful are your decrees; therefore I observe them.
The revelation of your words sheds light,
giving understanding to the simple. **(R)**

Second Reading — Romans 8: 28-30

²⁸ We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose.

²⁹ They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son, so that his Son might be the eldest of many brothers. ³⁰ He called those he intended for this; those he called he justified, and with those he justified he shared his glory.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1117. As she has done for the canon of Sacred Scripture and for the doctrine of the faith, the Church, by the power of the Spirit who guides her "into all truth," has gradually recognized this treasure received from Christ and, as the faithful steward of God's mysteries, has determined its "dispensation." (Jn 16:13; cf. Mt 13:52; 1 Cor 4:1) Thus the Church has discerned over the centuries that among liturgical celebrations there are seven that are, in the strict sense of the term, sacraments instituted by the Lord.

Sharing and Discussion

- 1) How real is the Kingdom of God to you?
- 2) How would you help others "search" for this Kingdom?
- 3) What are the practical implications for someone who finds it?

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, our needs are no surprise to you, yet we raise them with the trust you hear us when we call. As we strive to build your kingdom on earth, hear our prayers and give us the strength we need to continue our efforts of peace and reconciliation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Facilitator: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen