



July 30, 2023 | Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12 | Rom 8:28-30 | Mt 13:44-52

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

It is no secret that Jesus often taught using parables; last Sunday we heard three, and today there are more. Today's parables seemed obscure until I focused on the repeating phrase "kingdom of heaven," which is likened to treasure, a pearl of great value, and then a fish net. What a contrast! But when I thought about it longer, it made perfect sense: The kingdom of heaven is the greatest treasure, one that should compel us to give up everything like the person who finds treasure buried in a field or the merchant who buys the pearl, just to make sure we have it in our possession. The kingdom is also something that requires hard work, hence the analogy with fishermen throwing nets into the sea to capture fish and then sort the good from the bad. Think of that net as the predestination St. Paul mentions in today's epistle. God predestined mankind to be called to him, to be justified and glorified in his name, yet we all maintain free will to choose otherwise. So, at the end of the age, when the angels "separate the wicked from the righteous," each of us will learn how precious the treasure of heaven is according to the way we chose to pursue it during our lifetime.

INVITATION In the first reading Solomon said to God: "Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart." Take a few minutes and read Solomon's Prayer of Dedication for the temple that occurs a few verses later in 1 Kings (8:22-61). In it, he asks God to be with his people always – a prayer for us today as well.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

In the midst of the daily grind, heaven can seem so far removed from our lives until it's Sunday and we're standing in pews during Mass. But the kingdom of heaven isn't contained within the single act of attending Mass on Sundays. Jesus didn't say "attend church for one hour each week and you're all set" – the parables he speaks today show people who put in work, searching for treasure until they found it and did everything they could to ensure they kept it. Jesus taught in parables in order to extend his invitation to the kingdom of heaven to everyone who would listen. With these parables, the kingdom is more of an encounter than an end goal. When we are in a loving, prayerful relationship with God, we are able to recognize and know the joy and the infinite value of the kingdom. We are able to experience God's kingdom in the day-to-day experiences of our lives. We know that the kingdom can be found in Jesus, who is the way. And we know that Jesus is here with us now.