

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A/2014

The readings of this Sunday talk about the priority of values. They show us that the durable values are those that help us connect with God. They invite us to choose the values that make our life conform to the will of God.

The first reading describes the reign of the young king Solomon. It shows how, when he was confronted with the harsh reality of power, he asked for God's help. It shows also that instead of requesting material benefits, he asked God for an understanding heart in order to judge rightly and to distinguish right from wrong. It equally accounts for God's positive answer to his request, as he granted him a heart so wise and an understanding such that no one had had before him.

What is behind this text is the idea that God's wisdom is more important to human beings than anything else they can have in this world. Another idea is the truth that a successful leadership is that which puts the common good over personal ambitions and privileges. The last idea is that any renunciation accepted for the sake of God's kingdom always has a reward.

This text allows us to understand the stake of today's Gospel as Jesus, in a series of parables, compares the kingdom of heaven to a hidden treasure, a pearl of great price and a net thrown into the sea.

First of all, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure buried in a field that someone discovered and hid it again. In order to appropriate it, he sold everything he had and bought the field. In the second parable, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a pearl of great price that someone bought after having sold everything he had. In the last parable, he compares the kingdom of heaven to a net thrown into a sea that collects every kind of fish, but from which people separate the good from the bad when it is ashore. Then, he says that it will be like that at the end of the age when the angels will separate the righteous from the wicked.

In the end, Jesus finishes with a warning by reminding his listeners that anyone instructed in the kingdom is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the necessity of making the kingdom of God a priority for our life. In fact, there are a lot of things we do in this world in order to make our life easy and enjoyable. There are a lot of activities in which we are involved and which aim at enhancing the value and the quality of our life. Those things are so important to us that if one is taken away, the balance of our life would be comprised.

According to Jesus in today's Gospel, however, those things are less valuable with regard to the kingdom of God. Why? For Jesus, in fact, the kingdom of God is not something alongside others we possess in the world. We cannot put the kingdom of heaven at same level with the things of this world. It is the supreme good that gives meaning and value to everything else we do in this world.

Moreover, it is God who gives life and context to all our desires and needs. In that sense, his kingdom is the supreme value that any human being should be preoccupied for and

the things of this world should be submitted to it. That is why we have to give priority to the kingdom of God above everything else. That is what the parables of the hidden treasure and that of the pearl mean. The man who found the treasure buried in the field did not hesitate to sell everything he possessed in order to acquire it. The merchant who found the pearl of great price did not hesitate to sell everything he had in order to buy it. That is how we have to deal with the things of the world, namely to hold them as less valuable with regard to the kingdom of God.

What it means, in truth, is that the things we possess in this world should not become an obstacle in our relationship with God. They should not prevent us to arise to God and to search for the eternal values of God's kingdom.

That is why we have to understand that to consider the things of this world as less valuable, in comparison to the kingdom of God, does not mean that we have to despise them. On the contrary, we have to see them as means that God has put at our disposal in order to make our life easy and to help us by using them to ascend to him.

Because, as human experience has instructed us, the things of the world can become an impediment in our relationship with God, there is urgency that we make the right decision now in favor of God. It does not serve our interest if we delay the decision we have to make. In fact, the man who found the treasure buried or the merchant, who found the pearls, did not delay their decision to act and acquire those valuable objects they needed.

In the same way, the kingdom of God compels us to act now, to change our life and to convert from our sins. This is very important and requires a prompt decision. In fact, there is a tendency to think that opportunities are countless in life and we still have time to decide. But who knows how tomorrow will be? Who knows if the opportunity we miss today will come again our way? Who knows whether this is the last chance of our life?

The mentality of complacency cannot help us at all, because the time will come where it will be impossible to start again and go back. The wheel of history goes forward and not backward. As a Latin proverb says, "The wine is already in the glass". There is nothing else to do than to drink it. When that moment will come, it will be late. That moment will be a time of judgment and separation of the just from the wicked. That is the warning we have in the last parable.

Even if the church is the mixture of the bad and the good alike, like fish in the net, we have always to remember that God's intention is not that we stay as we are, but rather that we change and renounce our sins in order to conform our life to his will. May God help each of us to understand that his kingdom is a great treasure for which we have to sacrifice everything in order to have it! May he fill us with his Holy Spirit so that we may able to choose his kingdom as our ultimate value! May God bless you all!

**1 Kings 3: 5, 7-12; Romans 8: 28-30; Matthew 13: 44-52**



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