



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

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"...and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Matt 13:44

In this week's gospel, Jesus continues to teach about the kingdom of God through three parables. The three comparisons are quite vivid.

The image of the net cast upon the waters introduces a unique notion about the kingdom. This net represents the universal call to salvation where all are *"caught up"* and judged at the moment of our death. Each of us has been given the free will to develop our nature over a lifetime. We choose darkness over light. And in the end there is a rendering of our life story, represented in the final assessment of each *"fish."* Each life story has radical differences. And echoed here is the notion that God's tolerance and mercy is greater than our own as He measures these differences. Nonetheless, the *"wicked will be throw into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."* The gospel writer uses these stark words of Jesus as a literary means to warn us to avoid such a fate.

The man who buys the field with the buried treasure shows us that a total investment is characteristic of those who come to see the value of the kingdom, *"he sold all he had and bought that field" Matt 13:44.* Across the span of two-thousand years, this *"pearl of great price"* lore has come to be known by a large percentage of the Western Culture. It has become a common standard for evaluating the worth of something. The *"pearl of great price"* is worth investing every resource we have to acquire it.

The joy and child-like wonder and awe of the person that finds this *"pearl"* in the field is the surest discernment that affirms the selling of all possessions for the purchase of this single gift. This verse relates well to Mark's Gospel 10:45, *"The Son proclaimed the good news of the kingdom and purchased our great salvation through his death and resurrection."* We, in turn, *"purchase"* the joy of eternity as we search the depth of our being, created in the image of God, until we tap that fountain of life that is the source of our existence.

Jesus Christ calls us "deep calls unto deep" (Psalm 42:7) where there is perfect harmony, perfect oneness. In this moment of mystical encounter, our spirit is urged to befriend him, crying out, oh, that I might know Him! Not the things He gives, or what He imparts, but Him!

The impulse to barter all we possess for the one experience that gives us our greatest joy reveals our dignity as a child of God after a lifetime of yearning to satisfy our deepest longing. Our prayer rises in gratitude for the gift of *"the pearl of great price,"* the eternal fountain of the waters of life.

Like the scribes, may we, too, be *"instructed in the kingdom of heaven"* and granted the wisdom to hear, to contemplate, and to apply the meaning of these parables to any given situation.

Reflect this week on Jesus' teachings that shape us interiorly. Pray to become for others living parables that the Master does not cease to utter into the world through our witness. Oh, to become the voice of the Word, to pour out from our hearts the gift of freedom to the world, sharing all His secrets and all His mysteries. Lord, show us your love and mercy. In you, Lord, is our hope and we shall never hope in vain.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field,
which a person finds and hides again,
and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant
searching for fine pearls.*

*When he finds a pearl of great price,
he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.*

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea,
which collects fish of every kind.*

*When it is full they haul it ashore
and sit down to put what is good into buckets.*

What is bad they throw away.

Thus it will be at the end of the age.

*The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous
and throw them into the fiery furnace,*

where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

"Do you understand all these things?"

They answered, "Yes."

And he replied,

*"Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven
is like the head of a household
who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."*

The Gospel of the Lord