

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

SEEKING AUTHENTIC TREASURE

SUNDAY READINGS:

I Kings 3-5; 7-12

Psalms 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

TRUE TREASURE HUNTERS

The parables of Jesus that form today's Gospel question us on what we claim as our "treasure." Jesus speaks to us as his disciples, focusing our attention on the truly valuable in life—real treasure, not some ephemeral possessions.

Jesus directs our attention to true treasure, the priceless pearl; it is none other than the Kingdom of Heaven. To possess God, to share his friendship, to love him and to seek to do his will—this is to have genuine treasure, the only wealth worth possessing. How do we Christians set about our "treasure hunt"?

An Ongoing Task. We find this treasure, like both the merchant and fisherman in the Gospel, as we faithfully go about our daily duties. The Kingdom is discovered in the course of daily activities, done with dedication and service. Note that Jesus' parables emphasize that the Kingdom (God's rule and active presence in our lives) is given by God. It is God's (not our) Kingdom; it is a gift. We freely receive it with great joy.

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Realizing the priceless value of God's Kingdom, the disciple responds by doing everything possible to possess it; both merchant and fisherman (symbols of Jesus' disciples) surrender everything, just to possess the Kingdom. Yes, we are asked to give our *whole* selves, and, in return, we will receive the *whole* gift of God. We can imitate Saint Paul, who counted as garbage everything except "the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8). Nothing we will ever give up will be nearly as valuable as what we receive.

Continuous Challenge. This search for the treasure of great price is a life-long pursuit. The disciple must be decisive, resourceful, and willing to risk everything. It is a joy to seek God with our every energy, every decision, every hope, and every desire. Indeed, discipleship will be costly, as Bonhoeffer noted, and there is no "cheap grace." Yet, we pray to sincerely seek God and his Kingdom—*without* always counting the cost. Jesus reminds us: "Where your treasure is, there will be your heart" (Mt 6:21).

Other "treasure" passages from Matthew's Gospel can enrich our reflection and prayer. "Do not store up treasure for yourselves here on earth, where moths and woodworms destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But, store up treasure for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworms destroy them and thieves cannot break in and steal" (Mt 6:19-20). "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Mt 19:21).

Grateful Hearts. We rejoice to possess the treasure of Faith. Yet, it is a treasure that we wish to share with our families, neighbors, and friends—especially those who do not know Christ. While we are missionaries in our own surroundings; we also support those dedicated missionaries who leave home to preach the Gospel. Let us appreciate just how marvelous is the treasure we have found!

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - I Kings 3-5; 7-12: We read the Old Testament to appreciate the history of salvation that led up to the birth of Christ. The third (and last) king of the Twelve Tribes of Israel was Solomon, who succeeded David around 961 BC. Solomon realizes his limitations; thus, he asks God for an understanding heart that will be able to discern right from wrong.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130: This psalm expresses Solomon's sentiments on the value of true wisdom. God's law is "more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces." To appreciate God's commands means to seek to live with heartfelt compassion. Indeed, God's word "sheds light, giving understanding to the simple."

Second Reading - Romans 8:28-30: Today's reading from Paul's letter to the Romans is filled with rich theology. Here Paul gives us the comforting reminder that for Christians all things in life (difficulties, joys, frustrations, successes, failures) work together for good, even though we may not immediately perceive this reality. We seek to journey through life with this vision, an awareness that is fostered by prayer and meditation.

Gospel - Matthew 9:36-10:8: Reading the Gospels reinforces our appreciation that Jesus is a master-teacher, communicating profound truths about the Kingdom through multiple parables, numbering around forty. Today's Gospel describes the search of the merchant and the fisherman. Undoubtedly, Jesus' parables are filled with both new and old treasures!

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published three short, meditative books: ► *Living in Joyful Hope*, ► *Exploring Vatican II Treasures*, and ► *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (www.faithalivebooks.com).

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