

Sunday, July 30, 2017

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

2nd Reading: Romans 8: 8:28-30

Responsorial: Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130

Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52

What It Means to Treasure the Kingdom of Heaven

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field. (Matthew 13:44)

Who would expect to find a treasure chest in an ordinary field? Probably nobody. We might expect to find rocks, plants, a few squirrels, or maybe an empty soda can—but not treasure. Of course, Jesus isn't talking about a physical treasure. He is talking about something far more valuable: the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus describes the kingdom as something extraordinary that is “hidden in plain sight.” In truth, the kingdom can be found anywhere because it is God himself. It's his love and his presence made manifest among us. So wherever love is, that's where the kingdom is.

Today at church you may see a longtime parishioner who has fallen ill or a family in a tight financial spot. You may also see someone new, a person who doesn't know anyone and could use a warm welcome. If you respond generously to these opportunities to reach out, you will find the kingdom of heaven!

You can also touch the kingdom as you go about your business in the world. A coworker gets cancer and receives an outpouring of support. One of your children is troubled, and you rush to their side. A neighbor's spouse dies, and you help the community organize meals. Every time you overlook someone's faults or say encouraging and grateful words to someone, you are both discovering and bringing forth God's kingdom, his presence in ordinary places. You are also discovering that these “outbreaks” of the kingdom are more valuable to God than any buried treasure.

So be on the lookout for God's kingdom in your midst. Although the treasures of heaven cannot be bought with dollars, you can “buy that field” every time you offer your love to God and his people. Remember, Jesus said it is infinitely worth it!

“Jesus, help me to live in your love. Teach me to share that love as well. Lord, I want to make your kingdom present everywhere I go!”

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, God offers Solomon the deal of a lifetime: “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.” Even though Solomon could have anything he wanted from God, he chose this request: “Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.” The reading goes on to say that: “The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request.”
 - Why do you think Solomon’s request was so pleasing to God?
 - How important to you is having an “understanding heart” and the ability to “distinguish right from wrong”?
 - What additional steps can you take to allow your judgments and decisions to be guided more by the Holy Spirit than by your likes and desires?
2. In the responsorial psalm, the psalmist speaks these words to the Lord: “For I love your command more than gold, however fine. For in all your precepts I go forward; every false way I hate.”
 - Why should we love the Lord’s commands, even when they are often hard to keep?
 - How would you describe the circumstances or situations in your life that can make it difficult to follow the Lord’s commands?
3. The responsorial psalm ends with these words: “The revelation of your words sheds light, giving understanding to the simple.”
 - Why do you think this is true?
 - In what ways have the Scriptures, God’s word, given understanding to you?
4. The second reading begins with these words: “We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” The reading continues with these words: “For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”
 - How do our times of suffering help us to be “conformed” to the image of Jesus?
 - Why is it easier to complain or rail against our difficult situations instead of counting on the Lord’s love?
 - Can you share a difficult time when the Lord worked good for you despite your hurts, fears, or anxieties?
5. In the Gospel reading, the “kingdom of heaven” is compared to “a treasure buried in a field,” “a merchant searching for fine pearls,” and “a net thrown into the sea.” For the first two, the persons involved “sell all that he has” to buy the field and to buy the “pearl of great price.”
 - Though each one of these parables is quite different, what do they have in common with one another?
 - The kingdom of heaven is something that has so much greater value than any of the ones described in the Gospel reading. Why is this so?
 - How much do you “treasure” your relationship with Jesus? What else can you do to deepen this relationship?
6. The meditation ends with these words: “Every time you overlook someone’s faults or say encouraging and grateful words to someone, you are both discovering and bringing forth God’s kingdom, his presence in ordinary places. You are also discovering that these “outbreaks” of the kingdom are more valuable to God than any buried treasure. So be on the lookout for God’s kingdom in your midst. Although the treasures of heaven cannot be bought with dollars, you can “buy that field” every time you offer your love to God and his people. Remember, Jesus said it is infinitely worth it!”
 - What do these words mean to you?
 - How easy, or hard, is it for you to follow these words? Why?
 - Why do you think the acts described are “more valuable to God than any buried treasure”?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask for the grace and power to love others as Jesus has loved you (John 13:34), and the courage to make his kingdom known to others. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Jesus, help me to live in your love. Teach me to share that love as well. Lord, I want to make your kingdom present everywhere I go!”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of

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