

17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – A; July 30th 2023
1Kings 3:5, 7-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13:45-52

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Perhaps you remember that for the past three weeks in a row we have been listening to the Kingdom Parables of Jesus in Matthew. We notice a common feature in these Parables that Jesus sets before his audience a choice to make for the Kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of the world. Here comes the role of true wisdom.

As soon as King Solomon assumed the throne as King of Israel, God took the initiative and said to him, *“Ask something of me and I will give to you.”* The offer was unconditional and unlimited. So Solomon had a wide range of choices before him. As a young king he had many legitimate needs. He needed wealth, long life, powerful military, fame, security from his enemies, prosperity for the nation and you name it! But even to the amazement of God, Solomon asked for none of the above needs; rather he asked for **true wisdom** so that he might have an understanding heart to know **right from wrong**. He knew that with true wisdom he is able to do the right things and make the right choice. In other words, he wanted to lead a righteous life before God. In the materialistic point of view, Solomon’s act can be considered to be mere stupidity; he simply wasted a golden opportunity. But on the other hand, being pleased by Solomon’s right choice, not only God granted him wisdom but also fame and prosperity as well.

Exemplary wisdom is also featured in today’s gospel where Jesus continues with his Kingdom Parables. In the first two parables we see the two men, using their wisdom for the right choice. As soon as they found something precious, sold everything they had and went after it. In these two Kingdom Parables, **Jesus makes it very clear that the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven is the most precious pearl or treasure and worth more than anything else in the material world. One should take all measures to possess it.** It is worth to make all sacrifices to attain the Kingdom of God which is lasting forever. Whatever the kingdoms man builds on earth are either destroyed or left behind.

Solomon’s example invites the gathered assembly to be careful in what they choose and ask of God. Let us make a sincere examination of conscience and see what will I ask of God, if I get a chance? Sometimes, being overwhelmed by material and physical needs, when you and I pray, we may forget to pray for the spiritual needs. When our list of things is very long we may not waste time in pursuing eternal life or heaven; rather we will make sure of our material comforts on earth. But Solomon’s experience shows that when he asked only for wisdom, God blessed him with wisdom as well as

material prosperity and fame. That is why Jesus says in *Matthew's gospel 6:33*, ***“But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.”***

The modern age is dominated by secularism and materialism and also we face a distorted value system. So most of the people don't see anything beyond this world and they believe that heaven and hell are in the world itself and they are nothing but the creation of man. These people seek their heaven in the material things and comforts. They believe that the more material possessions they have the happier they become. So they start accumulating things in the world, assuming that they have found precious pearls. Though their houses become overfilled with these things, their hearts still remain empty. In other words, they don't find the joy and peace they are looking for. Finally, they leave all these things behind and die in utter disappointment. Whereas, those who keep a balance between the Kingdom of Heaven and the material world, they will be happy, though they may not have many things to fill their houses.

In Proverbs 11:28 the author warns us, ***“He who trusts in his riches will fall, but like green leaves the just flourish.”*** And also we read again in Proverbs. 3:13-14, ***“Happy the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding! For her profit is better than profit in silver, and better than gold is her revenue.”*** *We should know that the greatest treasure or wealth God has given us is Jesus Christ. The one who finds him and keeps him as the treasure will have wealth on earth as well as wealth in heaven.* That is why St. Paul writes in Philippians 3:8, ***“I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”*** Let us keep the words of Jesus in Matthew's gospel 6: 19-21, ***“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”***

Remember, I came into this world alone and I have to leave this world alone. I have to leave my worldly treasures behind and go back empty handed. But if I have strived to possess the greatest treasure, the Kingdom of Heaven, that will remain with me. It is good to remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:26, ***“What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?”*** One day finally when I stand before the Judgment Seat of God, He will ask me one question, *“You have constructed many things for your material comforts on earth; what have you constructed for your eternal life?”* *If I can say, Lord, I always kept the Kingdom of God as my treasure, then, we are justified.*