

2020 July 26

Seventeenth Sunday of the Ordinary Time

Readings:

First: 1 Kings 3.5-12, "Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind." (12a)

Psalms 119, "Your decrees are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them" (129)

Second: Romans 8.28-30, "All things work together for good for those who love God." (28a)

Gospel: Mathew 13.44-52, "The kingdom of God is like treasure hidden in a field" (44a)

Eschatology is down the way!

All the parables in Matthew's gospel chapter 13 are pointing to the eschatological events, that is, events pertaining to the end of time, reward and punishment time. The parables of the seeds and weeds have both elements of reward and punishment. The seeds highlight rewards while the weeds point to punishment. However, this parable is also about God's constant and infinite care for those chosen for the kingdom.

The other small parables of the mustard seed, the yeast, the hidden treasure in the field, the pearl merchant, the net thrown into the sea, etc., are more positive regarding rewards, of course, mostly for those with industrious and adventurous mind set. The net cast into the sea catching good and bad fish points to the rejection that may take place at the end of times. This chapter does not conclude Jesus's teaching on reward and punishment. He has many more with the same theme.

Matthew chapter 25 begins with two parables, one of the unfaithful slave and the other of the wicked tenants, and ends with the direct teaching about the Day of Judgment, finally separating the good and the bad, defining clearly what leads to reward and to punishment. All through the discourse on parables, Jesus discusses the ways for us to reach the right destiny. The treasure hunter when he finds the precious jewel takes the risk of parting with all his possessions to buy it; and the pearl merchant sells every other pearl he had to buy the one with great value and charm, a risky venture. Both these treasure hunters part with everything they had to gain the one that surpasses all others. The message of Jesus is that the kingdom will not descend upon us unless we take the steps to possess it, like the treasure hunters in the above parables.

In the readings from 1 Kings Solomon asked just for God's grace and wisdom and he was given much more than anyone on earth could imagine! Of course, he already had a fairly good grasp of God's blessings on his family for which he was immensely grateful. Like him we need to know what is most valuable and ask for it. God always give much more than you dare to ask. St. Paul's letter to the Romans assures us of God's constant companionship in our work for the kingdom. He goes a step further to tell that in the scheme of God we are already predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, and are on our way to be justified and glorified. Be of good cheer!

Fr. George

