

Happy Feast to our St James community. 25th of July (which is today) is the feast of St James the Apostle and we usually celebrate this feast with mass and other festive celebrations at St James school. Due to the current circumstances, we decided to record the St James mass and help our school children and families celebrate. I had to celebrate the mass and record the same in our church here all by myself. When it came to offer bread and wine, I realised that I had forgotten the bread and apologised to the 'participants' on camera that I had forgotten the bread and quickly ran to the sacristy and brought the bread and then the celebration went on. While viewing this mass online, one of the Harvey kids, I don't know if it is Patrick or Joseph, notices one crucial thing... apparently he said to his dad Chris, 'dad, Father Dispin forgot the bread but did you notice that he did not forget the wine'. This kid knows me too much. If you are looking for a connection to the gospel today, well, not much. I thought you might like to hear this.

Negative gearing. I am sure you are aware of this, but I did not understand this phrase when this was discussed in our political circles just before the last Federal Elections. Someone wise then made me understand that this term is a tax benefit related to investment property. Do you have an investment property? How do you decide where and how to invest? And by the way, what is your investment in life and where have you invested? How is this investment different to the investment that Jesus is talking about in the Gospel today?

Today's parables are quite interesting. They tell us that God's kingdom is not an investment property that you can have while keeping something and making a safe investment in something else. It demands that you lose everything else in order to gain that. A very crazy proposition indeed. Who in their right mind would do anything as silly as that? Let us go to the story in the Gospel today. In both parables the men appreciate the true value of what they have discovered and are willing to pay the cost of everything they have for the new treasure. To outsiders looking at them, the two men might appear totally crazy in risking *everything* on this one venture. Remember the wise saying 'don't put all your eggs in one basket'. But both men in the story are certain about the wisdom of what they must do; for them, the folly would be in missing out on this great opportunity.

The difference is that the two men who sold everything to make this investment knew the true value of what they were investing in and the outsiders who did not have that knowledge and insight thought that they were crazy. I believe that knowledge is key to understanding our investment. Some knowledge can be crazy and dangerous...like the Harvey kid who seems to know me.

Knowledge can be dangerous. It is this knowledge of conviction that led the men in the story to sell everything to make their lifetime investment. How do you come to understand what is the right investment to make? Well, I believe that this lockdown period has taught us so many things apart from teaching us how to create some nice homemade masks and recipes. When I speak to people to see how they are coping, most of them would say that they miss their family, miss going to school, miss their work place, miss meeting their mates at golf, miss

going for a coffee, miss seeing, holding and kissing their grandchildren, miss going to St John's church, miss the community. Do you see one common thing here...the fundamental element in all of this is RELATIONSHIP. We do not worry about the comforts of life and we seem to have taken it well but the relationship...that's the key. We realise that knowingly, or unknowingly, we have invested everything in our relationships and when that is shaken we are shaken too. This time of isolation has taught us that we are starved of relationship and make us refocus our lives on the important things of life. A few people have told me that they realise the value of being together, value of family and friends and the value of stillness. We seem to be unearthing precious gems in this time of losing a lot of other comforts. This brings us to understand that what matters is relationship and that is where our heart is and that is our treasure.

In the parables Jesus is asking the crowds if they perceive the kingdom of God in the same way: do they really see it as a treasure that is worth more than everything they now value in life? If the kingdom of God is not perceived as the authentic article, people will not bother renouncing anything to attain it.

Jesus' own perception of life differed sharply from so many people's. He was constantly challenging people to see and see again in order to understand anew. To that purpose his stories turned much of popular wisdom on its head, and this was done in the hope that his listeners might catch something of another way of living in God's world. In effect Jesus had what Solomon prayed for – a heart to discern the ways of the people and the ways of God. But more than this, Jesus had the determination to close the gap between the two ways.

We know that Jesus had to give up everything he valued – his family, his home, his security – to do his Father's will and preach the kingdom of God. For Jesus there was no treasure greater than his Father's will: when he uncovered what it was, he renounced everything to make it his own. His own family and neighbours thought his ways either puzzling or foolish; and when he gave up his own life, even his disciples could not understand this ultimate folly. But there was a purpose in it: even in death Jesus kept hold of his treasure.