

17th Sunday, Year A, Ordinary Time: (1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12; Rom 8:28-30; Mt 13:44-52)

Introduction: Each of the parables of today's gospel reading of today teaches us that the greatest treasure we can ever have in life is discovering the truth of the kingdom of God. In comparison, all other treasures are finite and limited in their value. St Paul says that he considers everything that life has to offer as rubbish when compared with the great treasure of knowing and following Christ. Paul uses the Greek word 'skubalon which translates more accurately as 'dung'.

Homily

The famous, world class painter, Vincent Van Gogh suffered a lot from ill health. Consequently, he had to often call on the services of doctors. But he scarcely ever had the money to pay doctors. On one occasion, after a certain doctor had taken care of him and nursed him back to health, Vincent wanted to show his gratitude in his own way. Since he had no money to give, he decided to paint a portrait of this doctor and made him a present of it. However, the doctor didn't think much of the painting. He accepted it alright but put it in the attic. There it took the place of a broken windowpane, serving the purpose of keeping out the drafts. The Doctor didn't know the value of Van Gogh's work. He undervalued it. Today, Vincent Van Gogh's paintings and works are almost beyond price.

Is it possible that one can possess treasures without knowing its worth? Are there treasures that we have that we tend to undervalue or that we don't even value at all? I guess there are many.

There was once a teacher who desired to make progress in his career and to climb the social ladder. He worked very hard. In fact, his work was his life. He put his best hours and best efforts to his work. He had little time for his family and friends. He had little time to enjoy life, to have rest or leisure. It was very clear to everyone where his treasure lay.

But then he had a heart attack one of his busy days, in the rush and bustle of his work. He was instantly rushed to the hospital where he lay for many days, drifting in and out of consciousness, and not knowing whether he would live or die. During moments of lucidity, he saw these shadowy figures by his bedside. One day those shadowy figures came into clear focus and he recognized them. They were his family, his wife and children who visited him daily and spent hours at his bedside.

In that instant, he became transformed. He saw where his treasure lay, it lay in his family, his home, the gift of life and of course in God. He saw how foolish he had been until now. He prayed with all his heart and breadth: "Lord give me back my life, and I will be happy. He resolved that if he got well, he would turn his priorities upside down. He made a full recovery. The day he was discharged from the hospital, he was deliriously happy. Everything had been given back to him. Through that painful experience, he gained much wisdom. Prior to this, he was completely focused on himself and his career. Now he decided to open up to others' to work for and with people. He became happier than he had ever been in his life.

All of us are searchers and treasure hunters in the sense that we are seeking for happiness. The goal is certain but perhaps like the poor teacher, we are searching in the wrong place and through a wrong means. Jesus says, where your treasure is, that is precisely where your heart will be. To know where our treasure is, we must know where our heart is. What is it that we love and that we pursue with all our hearts? That is precisely our treasure.

The true danger is in trying to have it both ways. The Bible describes such a life as serving both God and mammon. True wisdom and good choice consists in knowing what is most important and what lasts and having the courage to pursue it. It means being able to see life from God's point of view and being able to live it accordingly.

Sometimes, we go searching for treasures miles away from where it is or where it could be found. Each one of us has got sufficient gifts and treasures lying deep within us. We shall be happy the day we find the treasure that God has laid deep within us, within our own field, until we have found the treasure of our own worth.