

In the three short parables Jesus gives us today the Kingdom of God is compared to a treasure hidden in the field, a pearl of great price, and a net which catches abundant fish. Each discovery leads the one who experiences it to an action response. In the case of the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price, the finder sells “all that they have”; sacrifices their life’s security for the sake of possessing the treasure. In the third parable, the fisherman sorts through his “catch” keeping what is worthwhile, but discards that which will not earn him gain. The “kingdom of heaven” Jesus tells us is present in our searching, sacrificing, and sorting for our greatest Treasure—God’s very Life. In a word—Grace. Or put another way—personal relationship with God. Jesus tells us we must “sell” all that we are—empty ourselves of what we, or the world, considers be true wealth—so the Life God gives us freely and lavishly is ours forever.

But what if the “treasure” and the “pearl” of the first two parables are already in our possession?

A popular television program on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is “Antiques Road Show.” It has both a British and a U.S. segment. If you’ve ever watched it, individuals bring in personal items long stored in an attic, basement, or other personal storage areas. The items were either given to them by another family member (usually dead), or something they acquired at an estate or other auction sale. For example, the item may be an old ceramic bowl that has sat atop a console table inside the front door and has been a “catch-all” for keys, loose change, and the like. However upon inspection after turning it over, there’s a trademark stamp on the bottom the owner has questions about. Or, perhaps, it is a piece of old jewelry used to “dress-up” an outfit when going out to dinner that also has markings on it that the owner has questions about. Sometimes upon professional appraisal by one of the shows experts the item turns out not to have great wealth. However, occasionally that old ceramic bowl on the console turns out to be a piece of rare Meissen porcelain, or a genuine Tiffany & Co. brooch, worth tens of thousands of dollars. Upon hearing such news the response of the owner often is: “I would never have

guessed! All this time I possessed such a treasure and didn't know it! I'm going to see and use it differently from now on!"

In St. Luke's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples not to go searching after the Kingdom of God outside of themselves for "the Kingdom of God is already within you" (Lk. 17:20-21). We are like those people who come with their possession on "Antiques Road Show." Through our baptism the Kingdom of God, God's gift of divine life, grace, has been given us. It is the gift of God's very Self to us that raises us up to a share in divine joy, worth and righteousness (living in right relationship with God and others). The question is: do we recognize it? And further, what is each of us doing with it? It doesn't demand we go out to find it hidden in a field, or sort through clams for it already is ours. It does, however, demand that we take a closer look, do the necessary sorting out of our life's priorities, values, and actions, like the fisherman with his "catch" to make sure that we are living out of this supreme gift and not spending the wealth of our lives (time, energy, financial treasure) on fool's gold or paste jewelry—looks like the real thing, but in the end is fake.

The "Kingdom of God" already within us is discovered in our everyday circumstances: through prayer, celebration of the sacraments, time spent reading and reflecting on the Scriptures, the smile given or received in a gesture of hospitality to a family member or stranger; taking the first step toward forgiveness and reconciliation with someone from whom I'm estranged; committing myself to serving others in a parish-sponsored or community sponsored service opportunity; advocating for justice with our elected representatives on human life issues especially on behalf of those who are the voiceless among us—in these and similar ways we discover the "treasure", the "pearl" the Kingdom of God already in our possession.

"Because you have asked—not for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, but for understanding so that you may know what is right—I (God) do as you requested." Like Solomon may we also know where our true treasure, our pearl of great price is found.

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