

17th Sunday, yr. A, Xavier Church, 1 Kings 3, 5.7-12; Ps 119, 57,72,76-77,127-130; Rom 8, 28-30; Mat 13, 44-52

Fr. Ward Biemans SJ

## Homily

Dear brothers and sisters, say that it would happen to you: that God asks you in a dream: 'What do you want me to give you?' It happens to young King Solomon, as we heard in the first reading. He asks the Lord for a perceptive spirit, a spirit filled with wisdom. This answer from Solomon pleases the Lord. He has not asked for things that are primarily in his own interest, such as a long life, or wealth. But he asks for wisdom to be able to be righteous to his people. Therefore, he gets from the Lord what he desires.

The psalm we have been praying with, Psalm 119, makes the same plea. 'The law that comes from the mouth of God is worth more than treasures of silver and gold.' And in the Gospel, Jesus talks about a treasure hidden in a field and about a merchant looking for a pearl. When someone has found it, he sells everything he has and buys that pearl, or he buys that field containing the treasure.

Jesus here speaks to his disciples in parables about the Kingdom of heaven. He asks His disciples if they have understood these parables, and these answer Him: yes, we have. And He ends His speech by saying: every Scribe taught about the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure new and old. An old story, for example, is from the Old Testament about King Solomon. New and everlasting is the covenant of the Gospel, the New Testament.

So what can these parables from the Gospel say to us? The answer is the same for everyone and yet also different for everyone. How is this possible? The kingdom of heaven, that is the kingdom of God. Everyone who finds God in his or her life is like someone who has found a treasure or a pearl. You want to give up everything to possess that treasure, that pearl. God is the source of our existence, it is He who gives meaning to our existence. He is the One who made us. That is every one of us.

But Jesus' parables simultaneously give space to each of us personally, to be able to ask ourselves: What is my treasure in life? What is my pearl? What is it that my heart deeply desires?

This is why the young Solomon in the Old Testament asks for God's wisdom. This is how God distributes his gifts to each of us in secret. With St. Paul, we hear that God promotes in everything the salvation of those who love God, those who are called by God. Being called by God is something that takes place in the hidden, in the silence of our hearts, in the silence of prayer. When you follow God's call in your

life, it gives you profound peace. For me, for instance, the vocation to the priesthood is a source of great joy and peace, although it is clear, also in my life, that I have given up great things like a partner or a family of your own to do so. Similarly, a nurse may feel called to help others, even if circumstances are sometimes tough, like during the Covid pandemic. A father wants to give the best to his child, a mother to her son or daughter, a grandparent to the grandchildren. And parenting sometimes means giving up things you used to enjoy doing.

Brothers and sisters, we have heard that Jesus told another parable about the kingdom of heaven, the one about the dragnet with the good fish and the bad fish. The parable of the dragnet is used by Jesus to tell about the last judgement. Like the parables about the treasure and the pearl, this parable about the fish in the sea also has a personal meaning for us. It makes it clear to us that in the Kingdom of heaven we must be like the good fish that will be kept, lest we be lost at judgment day. The merchant who finds the pearl will do anything to buy it. Similarly, God's gifts, the talents we have received from Him, are precious like a pearl of great value. We should not waste our talents, but cherish them, polishing them every now and then like you do with jewellery, so that they do not lose their lustre. When we desire our talents to increase in value, we should not keep them for ourselves, but use them for others, so that they too may discover the treasure in their lives, the Kingdom of heaven in their lives. Amen.