

GOSPEL*Matthew 13:44-52*

Jesus said to the crowds, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

‘Have you understood all this?’ They said, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Well, then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.’

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Today the Gospel narrates the parable of a merchant in search of precious gemstones, who, Jesus says, “on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Mt 13:46). Let us pause a little on the actions of this merchant, who first seeks, then finds and finally buys.

The first action: to seek. He is an enterprising merchant, who does not stand still, but leaves his house and sets out in search of precious pearls. He does not say: “I am satisfied with the ones I have”; he looks for more beautiful ones. And this is an invitation to us not to close ourselves up in habit, in the mediocrity of those who are complacent, but to revive desire, so that the desire to seek, to go on, is not extinguished; to cultivate dreams of good, to seek the newness of the Lord, because the Lord is not repetitive. He always brings newness, the newness of the Spirit. He always makes the realities of life new (cf. Rev 21:5). And we must have this attitude: to seek.

The merchant’s second action is to find. He is an attentive person who “has a keen eye” and knows how to recognize a pearl of great value. This is not easy. Let us think, for example, of the fascinating oriental bazaars, where the stalls, filled with goods, are crowded along the walls of streets filled with people; or of some of the stalls one sees in many cities, full of books and various objects. Sometimes if one stops to look closely in these markets, one can discover treasures: precious things, rare volumes that, mixed in with everything else, one does not notice at first glance. But the merchant in the parable has a sharp eye and knows how to find, he knows how to “discern” to find the pearl. This too is a teaching for us: every day, at home, on the street, at work, on holiday, we have the possibility of glimpsing good. And it is important to know how to find what counts: to train ourselves to recognize the precious gems of life and to distinguish them from junk. Let us not waste time and freedom on trivial things, pastimes that leave us empty inside, while every day life offers us the precious pearl of the encounter with God and with others! It is necessary to know how to recognize it: to discern in order to find it.

And the merchant’s last action: he buys the pearl. Realizing its immense value, he sells everything, he sacrifices all his goods just to have it. He radically changes the inventory of his warehouse; there is no longer anything other than that pearl: it is his only wealth, the meaning of his present and his future. This too is an invitation for us. But what is this pearl for which one can renounce everything, the one of which the Lord speaks to us? This pearl is Him: it is the Lord! Seeking the Lord and finding the Lord, encountering the Lord, living with the Lord. The pearl is Jesus: He is the precious pearl of life, to be sought, found and made one’s own. It is worth investing everything in him because, when one encounters Christ, life changes. If you meet Christ, your life changes.

Let us then return to the merchant’s three actions: seeking, finding and buying — and ask ourselves some questions. Seeking : am I searching, in my life? Do I feel fine, accomplished, do I settle for things, or do I exercise my desire for good? Am I in spiritual retirement? How many young people are in retirement! The second action, finding : do I practise discerning what is good and comes from God,

knowing how to renounce what leaves me with little or nothing? Finally, buying : do I know how to spend myself for Jesus? Is he in first place for me, is he the greatest good in life? It would be nice to say to him today: “Jesus, You are my greatest good”. Each one of you in your heart, say now: “Jesus, you are my greatest good”.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: The merchant sells everything for the pearl because he recognises its value. What does this parable reveal about the difference between knowing about Jesus and recognising him as life's greatest treasure?



Head: Pope Francis asks whether we are still seeking or have settled into mediocrity. Where in your life have you become comfortable, complacent, or less open to the newness that God wants to bring?



Hands: Finding the pearl leads to a decision. What is one thing you may need to let go of, reprioritise, or invest in more fully if Jesus is truly your greatest good?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’