

July 30, 2017  
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Matthew 13:44-52

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. 46 When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. 48 When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. 49 Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

51 "Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes."

52 And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

### Background

This week's Gospel text, along with the text from the two previous weeks, has given the reader the opportunity to reflect on a block of Jesus' parables that take up almost the entire 13th chapter of Mathew's Gospel. All of these parables were addressed to the crowds that came to hear Jesus' teaching. However, the explanation of the meaning of the parables was reserved for the disciples.

The three short parables that comprise the majority of the text for this week are all taken from familiar experiences of common people of the day--a farmer, a merchant, and a fisherman. The first two parables present the kingdom of God as a great treasure that is present, but hidden to the non-observant. This theme was hinted at by Jesus two weeks ago. When the disciples asked Jesus why he taught with parables, he responded: "This is why I speak to them in parables, because 'they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.'" (Matthew 13:13) The parable about the kingdom being like a fisherman's drag net is similar to the parable of the farmer who let the weeds grow along with the wheat. In both parables, Jesus says that angels will separate the wicked from the righteous in the final judgment.

From another perspective, the three parables of the Gospel for today present three different ways that people discover the kingdom of God. In the first parable, the farmer finds a treasure in a field, which seems to suggest an unexpected discovery. The farmer responds with joyful enthusiasm that would be considered reckless by his fellow farmers. If the farmer sells everything to buy this field and the field does not produce a good harvest, the farmer is in danger of losing the field and the treasure. In the second parable, the merchant is diligently seeking the great pearl. The response to the discovery is equally enthusiastic as that of the farmer. The last parable is about fishermen who are about the ordinary task of the day--separating the fish from the other objects that the net picked up as it was dragged through the sea. The kingdom is present, but they are unaware of its presence until the very end when they discover what has been caught. Some of the "catch" will be kept and some discarded. This parable seems to echo the theme of the over-generous action of God as was described in the parable of the sower at the start of this chapter. (Matthew 13:1-9) These parables present a picture of God who is at work establishing the kingdom, and bringing people to an awareness of the kingdom through various efforts on their part. The theme that runs through the three parables in today's text is that God has placed the kingdom within the reach of common people, those who find the kingdom realize that it is to be valued above all else, and discovery of the kingdom brings great joy to those who discover it.



## Reflection Questions

1. When you reflect on your life journey, what are some of the things you have desired?
2. What are some of the things that have brought you a sense of joy?
3. Are the things that have brought you joy the same things that you have desired?
4. Have you desired the wrong things?
5. Have your mistakes at desiring the wrong things led you to a better understanding of what it is you truly desire?
6. How would you complete the line: "The kingdom of God is like..."
7. Does your image of God's Kingdom leave you with a sense of being overjoyed?
8. What are the things in the last week that have left you with a sense of joy?
9. Which of the three parables in this text most attracts your attention? How would you like to respond to that fascination?
10. When you reflect on your desires and how those desires have impacted your life, what would you like to say to God?

<http://il-ritiro.org/gospel-reflections.aspx>

The reflection and questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel.



**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS WILL BE THE LAST SUNDAY GOSPEL FOR A WHILE AS WE ARE CHANGING OUR FORMAT**