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Commentary on the Gospel: The Hidden Treasure

Gospel for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A), and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 13:44-52*)

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great

value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.

“Have you understood all this?”

They said to him, “Yes.”

And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Commentary

Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a treasure hidden in the ground. The reaction of the man who finds it does not seem to be all that virtuous. He hides what he finds from the owner of the field and pawns all his goods in order to buy the land and keep the treasure for himself. Nevertheless, Jesus points to this person's eagerness to possess the treasure in order to highlight the enormous value of the Kingdom of God, a treasure whose discovery should fill us with joy and also a determined desire to make it our own.

Truly the Christian's treasure (or the pearl of great price in the next parable) is Christ himself, who offers us his love and friendship, and whom we should put first in the

order of our affections and interests. Saint Josemaria said with regard to this parable: “Then there is the treasure. You can imagine the immense joy of the lucky man who finds it. The hard times, the sufferings are over. He sells everything he has and buys the field. His whole heart is there, where his treasure lies hidden.”[1] And the founder of Opus Dei adds: “Our treasure is Christ. We shouldn’t mind having to throw overboard everything that impedes our following Him. Our boat, once freed of its useless cargo, will sail directly to the safe harbor of God’s Love.”[2]

Pope Francis too identifies the treasure in the field with Jesus’ Love: “Those who know Jesus encounter Him personally, *are captivated, attracted* by so much goodness, so much truth, so much beauty, and all with great humility and simplicity. To seek Jesus, to find Jesus: this is the

great treasure! The Gospel allows you to know the real Jesus, it lets you know the *living* Jesus; it speaks to your heart and changes your life. And then, yes, you leave it all. You can effectively change lifestyles, or continue to do what you did before but *you* are someone else, you are reborn: you have found what gives meaning, what gives flavor, what gives light to all things, even to toil, even to suffering, and even to death.”[3]

Jesus also compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a great net that draws in everyone without distinction. And in the end, everyone faces a judgment, like the choice fishermen make of the fish caught in order to discard those that aren't suitable. This parable is therefore a metaphor for the end of the world, for the final judgment that precedes the definitive possession of the Kingdom by those who have merited it during their lifetime.

The parable of the great net is also related to the parables of the treasure and the pearl. Precisely because the Kingdom (the Love of Christ) is as valuable as a treasure or an exquisite pearl, we will be asked to render an account of how eagerly we have sought it and loved it in this life: As Saint Josemaria used to urge those in contact with him: “May you seek Christ; may you find Christ; may you love Christ.”[4]

Saint Thomas Aquinas taught that “beatitude is bestowed in proportion to charity and not in proportion to any other virtue.”[5] So the best way to “buy” the treasure in the field or the pearl of great price, what will truly make us “good fish,” will be our love for God and other men and women. On that we will be judged. “When evening comes,” Saint John of the Cross wrote, “you will be examined in love. Learn to love as God desires to be loved.”[6]

[1] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 254.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 27 July 2014.

[4] Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 382.

[5] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On Charity*, 1, 204.

[6] Saint John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, no. 60.

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