

The Hidden Treasure

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) – Mt 13:44-52
July 30, 2023 – Ave Maria Parish – Fr. David M Vidal

In the Gospel of this Sunday's Liturgy, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a *hidden treasure that a man found and hid; then, in his joy, he sells all he has and buys that field*, (Mt 13: 44).

The man of the parable does not hide the treasure to leave it forgotten, nor does he hide it to stop others from discovering it. Saint Jerome tells us: "*He hides it, not because of envy towards others, but as one who treasures up what he would not lose, he hides in his heart that which he prizes above all his former possessions.*"

That is the meaning of the man's action in the parable when we compare it with the following words of Jesus: "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.*"

A master of fine pearls sells all his pearls because he wants to get the *greatest one!*

How do these examples speak to us? Are they relevant to our lives? Of course, they are.

We all have little pearls and little treasures. We have things that we value and care for, such as health, friends, family, the time and money we have to spend, things that we possess and use. Nobody can say: I have nothing. We possess gifts given to us, starting with the simplest elements, like the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. These are obvious treasures that we love and protect.

Now, Jesus speaks about a treasure that is hidden. This treasure is the *kingdom of heaven*, which means, a life of grace and friendship with God here on earth and a life of glory and eternal happiness in the life to come!

It is not a common treasure; we need to search for it. And it is not easy to find it because the little treasures of the world are right before our human eyes. Often, they prevent us from seeing beyond them, which can cause us to be short-sighted.

What would we give to keep or to have physical health? What would we give to secure water, food, or a home? In challenging times, we know we are willing to give a lot! Now the question is, what would you give for your eternal life? What would you give for your eternal happiness?

The busyness of everyday life might prevent us from thinking about eternity. However, our busyness does not make the question worthless: What would you give? What would you do for your eternal happiness? Is not eternal happiness your greatest treasure?

We cannot be satisfied with a simple “I don’t know.” The question is too important to ignore.

Our lives go beyond the present life, and we must look for the “great treasure” (see Mt 13:44) and the “pearl of great price” (see Mt 13:46) that God offers us.

Here on earth, that most valued treasure and pearl of great price is the grace of God. This treasure was given to us on the day of our baptism. Sanctifying grace is the greatest treasure we have received. Why? Because sanctifying grace opens for us the gates of heaven, grace makes us children of God, one body with Jesus, and temples of the Holy Spirit.

And if that were not enough, God gives us more and more because God’s treasure has no limit. He offers us the cleansing waters of the sacrament of reconciliation that renews us spiritually. He gives Himself to us in Holy Communion, the wonderful Hidden Treasure of Jesus Himself.

Now, the value of this treasure and fine pearl cannot be measured by the standards of this world. This is something that you cannot buy with silver or gold. It is because sanctifying grace leads us to the eternal life of heaven.

Let us think how much people may suffer for the loss of even a small sum of money, the loss of little things or personal items. We suffer material losses. However, nothing can be compared with the loss of eternal happiness. Matthew 16:26 reminds us: *“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?”*

That is why the greatest treasure of sanctifying grace and friendship with God must be defended at any cost, every day: with our daily prayer and sacramental life, by the sacrament of penance and Holy Communion.

Today, before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we will ask our Lord to always keep in our hearts that precious pearl we received on the day of our baptism.

Today, before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we will ask to see Him as our True Hidden Treasure.

Today, we will also ask Mary, Our Blessed Mother, to help us understand that all this world's little treasures cannot compare with the Greatest Treasure of our lives in God. Then, we will be ready to see that all things in this world are nothing *when we compare them to the love of Jesus*. (Phil 3:8). Amen.