

Homily for the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, by Fr. Robin Joseph CRM

Readings: 1 Kings 3:5-6a, 7-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13:44-52

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Imagine that while digging in your garden, you suddenly strike a metal box. You open it and discover that it is filled with priceless gold and precious jewels. What would you do? You would probably sell everything you owned to buy that piece of land because you know the treasure is worth infinitely more than anything you could ever possess.

That is exactly the image Jesus gives us today. The treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price are not simply objects. They represent Jesus Himself and the Kingdom of God. Once we truly discover Him, everything else finds its proper place.

Sadly, many people spend their entire lives chasing treasures that cannot last. They work day and night to accumulate wealth, to gain recognition, or to become successful. There is nothing wrong with these things in themselves, but if they become our greatest treasure, they will eventually disappoint us. We have all seen that money cannot buy peace, success cannot heal a broken heart, and fame cannot remove loneliness.

St. Augustine speaks directly to every human heart when he says:

"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

How true those words are! Many people have everything the world offers, yet they still feel empty because only God can satisfy the deepest longing of the human soul.

The first reading gives us another beautiful example. When God asked Solomon, "Ask what I shall give you," Solomon did not ask for riches, power, or a long life. Instead, he prayed for wisdom—the wisdom to know God's will and to serve His people faithfully.

That is why Jesus tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God. When our priorities are right, everything else falls into place.

I know the story of an elderly woman who had little money. Her home was simple, her clothes were old and only two pairs, she was curved and her face was full of wrinkles and she owned nothing for her. Yet everyone who visited

her left feeling peaceful and joyful. When someone asked her, "How can you always smile?" she replied, "Because every morning before my feet touch the floor, I thank God for another day to love Him." She possessed little, but she had found the greatest treasure—Christ—and therefore she lacked nothing and her name is Mother Theresa of Culcutta!

On the other hand, we sometimes meet people who seem to have everything—a beautiful home, a successful career, financial security—yet they are anxious, restless, and unhappy. Their lives remind us that possessions are not the same as peace.

The merchant in today's Gospel recognised the value of the pearl immediately. He sold everything without hesitation.

The question for us is: What are we holding on to that prevents us from possessing Christ more fully?

Perhaps it is pride that keeps us from saying, "I'm sorry."

Perhaps it is unforgiveness that has poisoned our heart for years.

Perhaps it is an addiction, a dishonest habit, or simply being too busy for God.

Perhaps we spend hours scrolling through our phones but struggle to spend ten quiet minutes with the Lord in prayer.

Jesus gently asks us today: "What are you willing to let go of so that you may possess the treasure that never fades?"

St. John Chrysostom beautifully says:

"He who has Christ, though he possess nothing else, is richer than all men."

The second reading gives us immense hope. St. Paul assures us:

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God."

Notice he does not say that everything is easy or pleasant. We all experience illness, grief, disappointments, family worries, and uncertainty. Yet God is like a master artist who can create a beautiful masterpiece even from broken pieces.

Think of a stained-glass window. Up close, you see only fragments of coloured glass. They appear broken and meaningless. But when the sunlight shines through, a breathtaking image appears. So too in our lives. Today we may see only broken pieces, but God already sees the finished masterpiece.

Finally, Jesus reminds us through the parable of the fishing net that one day we shall stand before Him. The greatest question on that day will not be, "How much did you earn?" or "How successful were you?" It will be, "Did you love Me? Did you love your neighbour? Did you make My Kingdom your greatest treasure?"

St. Gregory the Great reminds us:

"The treasure of heaven is purchased not with earthly riches but with holy living."

Dear brothers and sisters, every Mass is like discovering the treasure hidden in the field. Here we encounter Christ Himself in His Word and in the Holy Eucharist. The treasure we seek is not buried in the ground—it is placed upon this altar. Let us never become so familiar with this priceless gift that we fail to recognise its value.

As we receive Jesus today in Holy Communion, let us pray with the simplicity of Solomon:

"Lord, give me a wise heart. Help me to choose You before everything else. May nothing in this world become more precious to me than Your love."

Then, whatever happens in life, whether in joy or sorrow, in abundance or in hardship, we shall possess the one treasure that can never be lost—Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen