

Today we conclude our reading of chapter 13 of St. Mathew's Gospel. We have spent three Sundays working through the 'Kingdom Parables': the sower, the darnel, the mustard seed, the yeast, and today: the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price and the dragnet. Next Sunday we will move into the next chapter and begin a sequence of miracles: the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the water and the healing of the Canaanite woman.

The key word in the treasure and pearl parables is 'everything'. Is Jesus my pearl of great price? Is his good news and the proclamation of the kingdom my dearest treasure? I may not have to sell everything to 'buy' these things; indeed they are freely given as gift. But truly receiving them affects everything.

Being a disciple of Jesus costs not less than everything. His kingdom, and His law of love and service, must come first in my life, and He must touch, change and transfigure everything in my life. Nothing can be off limits. This is a life-long task, often incomplete, and only finished by Grace, in this life and in the final journey of purification we call purgatory. And so even though we may acknowledge how partial, how poor, how conditional our acceptance of the kingdom is, we are filled with hope, and that hope keeps us going, inspiring us to keep trying.

The dragnet parable picks up the same theme as the darnel. Good and bad are jumbled in together, but there will be a final sorting. While fearful preaching about weeping and grinding of teeth is not as fashionable as it once was, we cannot jettison the fact of God as judge. We hope in God as a bringer of ultimate justice, that wrongs will be righted and that the wicked won't get away with it for ever. If we have such a hope then God must ultimately judge. No judgement means no justice and a meaningless hope.

Finally the store holder with things both old and new, and the wisdom given to Solomon in the first reading. The Gospel is 2000 years old, and much of it draws on the Old Testament and so is even older. Yet we must be wise, we must find a way to live and proclaim the old, authentic Gospel that is fresh and new in each generation, in a language that speaks to our time and place. We must respect, maintain, preserve and proclaim the old formulas; and at the same time bring them out from the storeroom in ways that are new, in words and actions that truly speak.

Wisdom and Grace will guide us. And if the gospel truly is our pearl of great price, our love for it will shine clearly in all we do and say.