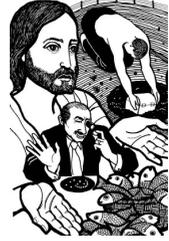




AMDG
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
26TH JULY 2020



The Kingdom of Heaven ...

OPENING PRAYER

O God, protector of those who hope in you,
without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy,
bestow in abundance your mercy upon us
and grant that, with you as our ruler and guide,
we may use the good things that pass
in such a way as to hold fast even now
to those that ever endure.

As Ordinary Time continues, we are still in the central part of Matthew's Gospel where Jesus is teaching by means of parables. Today we have four more parables to add to the four already heard over the last couple of Sundays. These parables stress in particular the great value of the kingdom.

In the *First Reading* we have the narrative of the young king Solomon asking God for the gift of wisdom, so as to discern the true value of things and rule his people with understanding.

The verses taken from the *Psalms* extol the value of God's law, a treasure that brings true happiness.

St Paul, in the *Second Reading*, reveals the mutuality between the faithful follower and the generosity of the Father, who will justify and glorify those he has called.

In the *Gospel* the kingdom of heaven is likened to finding a treasure and selling everything to possess it. Good and bad coexist until the time of final judgment.

Maybe this week we can pray for the grace to recognize the kingdom amongst us and around us.

FIRST READING 1 KINGS 3: 5, 7-12

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, 'Ask what you would like me to give you.' Solomon replied, 'Lord, my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of these people of yours that you have chosen, a people so many its numbers cannot be counted or reckoned. Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great?' It pleased the Lord that Solomon should have asked for this. 'Since you have asked for this', the Lord said, 'and not asked for long life for yourself or riches or the lives of your enemies, but have asked for a discerning judgement for yourself, here and now I do what you asked. I give you a heart wise and shrewd as none before you has had and none will have after you.'

As I settle to prayer, I become aware of the sounds or the stillness around me.

I note how I feel, knowing that God accepts me just as I am.

I relax into his presence as I strive to open my heart to his word.

I then read the text carefully, once or twice.

Perhaps I can imagine this dream of Solomon. He is a young man taking on a role of enormous responsibility.

What *could* he have asked for?

What *does* he ask for?

I consider my own situation, my own needs and anxieties, my hopes and my desires. I place these before my Lord and perhaps speak to him at length about them, knowing he can see my heart.

When he asks me, '*Ask what you would like me to give you*', what will I ask for?

If I can only ask for one thing, what would it be?

I may also turn to him in gratitude for all that I have already received.

Before I finish my prayer, I pray with confidence for my loved ones and the wider world, ending with a '*Glory be ...*'

GOSPEL MATTHEW 13: 44-52

“The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that is cast in the sea and brings in a haul of all kinds of fish. When it is full, the fishermen bring it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in baskets and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the upright, 50. to throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.’ Have you understood all these?’ They said, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old.’”

As I come to pray, I take the time to slow down and to relax my body and mind. I breathe in God's love and life. I enter God's presence in me and around me more deeply.

When I am ready, I take up the Gospel passage and read it slowly a couple of times.

Which of the four parables strikes me most?

I may wish to stay just with this one, asking myself 'why?'

I may speak to the Lord, applying the parable to myself and allowing him to show me its truth in my life.

Or I may wish to ponder on what the kingdom of heaven means to me now, after all these parables.

God's presence or closeness in my life ... in my community ... in my world ...?

Does my understanding colour the values I hold, and the actions I undertake?

Have I thrown all my rubbish into the sea?

As I end my prayer, I may choose to take away, in gratitude, one pearl to carry me through the day or week.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern
between good and evil.

First Reading

'The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field ...'

Gospel

God our Father,
open our eyes to see your hand at work
in the splendour of creation,
in the beauty of human life.
Touched by your hand our world is holy.
Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us,
to share your blessings with our brothers and sisters,
and to experience the joy of life in your presence.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

1 Kings 3: 5, 7-12; Psalm 118 (119); Romans 8: 28-30; Matthew 13:
44-52



**Treasures
new and
old**



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

JESUIT
Ministries



Prepared by St Beuno's Outreach in the Diocese of Wrexham