

17th Sunday per Annum - A
I Kings 3:5, 7-12;
Romans 8:28-30;
Matthew 13:44-46
Little Flower - 7/26/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

All three readings today challenge us to reflect on what is important in our lives, what our priorities are, and what our goals are.

In today's Gospel, Jesus presents two parables concerning the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl of great price. In both parables, both finders went out and sold all they had to buy them. In both parables, the kingdom of heaven is the great prize. In Matthew 6, Jesus was very clear about what our priorities and goals should be: *“seek first the kingdom (of God) and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides”* [Mt. 6:33]. In Matthew, *all these things* refer to food, drink, and clothing, our basic needs.

Today's Gospel challenges us to consider our own priorities. Do we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Are the kingdom of God and his righteousness priorities in our lives at all? If the kingdom of God and his righteousness are not high priorities for us, what are our priorities?

In Lenten homilies, I have frequently mentioned the three universal idols or false gods: money and possessions; power, influence, and prestige; and pleasures of all kinds. Since they are idols or false gods, the question we all have to ask ourselves is the extent to which we make any or all of them the most important priorities in our lives. None of them are bad in themselves. They are only bad when we put them above seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. God's righteousness is living in right relationships with God, others, the world, and ourselves. In other words, these idols become bad when they take priority over the people and relationships in our lives. As one author wrote, we are called to love people and use things, but we often love things and use people.

Along the same lines, Jesus also said,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be [Mt. 6:19-21].

If God promised to give you one thing you requested, what would you ask for? If you want a hint, you probably should reflect on what you typically ask from God. In today's first reading, God promised Solomon he would give him whatever he requested. What did Solomon ask for? *“Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.”* God praised Solomon for not asking for what kings typically ask for: a long life for himself, riches, or the lives of his enemies. Ultimately Solomon was asking for wisdom, which is the ability to see and judge as God sees and judges.

My brothers and sisters, today's second reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans reminds us that God has a plan for each of us. This is why the gift of wisdom is so important. We need wisdom to discern God's plan and call in our lives. At the same time, Paul gives us confidence and hope: *“we know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”* Although God's plan may not be evident in the short term or as life is coming at us, we still believe that God will make all things good in the end.