**17A 2023**

1 Kings 3:5.7-12; Romans 8:28-30; Matt 13:44-52

A few days ago I had a conversation on the ‘phone with a priest friend and I asked him what he was going to preach about on today’s Gospel parables. There was a deep sigh after which he said wearingly: “I don’t know! I’m parabled out.” Over the past few Sundays we’ve heard a succession of parables from Matthew’s Gospel – perhaps all of us are feeling ‘parabled out,’ maybe rather wearied from hearing so many different explanations about what the Kingdom of God is like. Yet Our Lord spends so much time explaining the kingdom of heaven because we need to be reminded about its importance in our lives, even though it may seem so distant from us. The promise of the parables about the kingdom of heaven is that even when the kingdom is not seen, it is near.

The three parables in today's Gospel are all about the gift of discernment as the key to possessing the kingdom of God.

The most discerning listeners in Jesus' audience understood that the treasure, pearl and catch of the day in these compelling stories was none other than the Lord himself and that He was inviting them to enter into a new relationship with God that would bring joy. That invitation is extended to us today. How will we respond?

Like Solomon in our first reading today we need to pray “give us an understanding mind, so that we may discern between good and evil.” The parable of the catch of fish in today’s gospel shows us that we need wisdom to know what to keep and what to throw away from all that is offered to us on the plate of life in order to be faithful disciples.

What we need is Prudence, not a person, but a virtue, which St Thomas Aquinas described as “right reason in action.” Prudence is not the same as shrewdness or worldly calculation where we figure out how to get the best price, the best deal, the best of whatever it is that we happen to want. According to Pope Benedict XVI, “prudence demands humble, disciplined and vigilant reason that does not allow itself to be dazzled by prejudices; does not judge according to desires and passions, but seeks the truth — even uncomfortable truth.” Prudence requires attentive listening to the Word of God, prayerful reflection, a consideration of others’ needs, and an honest appreciation of our own strengths and weaknesses. Prudence is summed up for me in our opening prayer today: ‘ 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.’

Life is a bit like a continual treasure hunt – we are always in search of the source of ultimate happiness, at times we think we have found it, only to discover that it fails to truly satisfy us and make us happy. Ultimately we discover that the only treasure that matters and that satisfies us completely is God – and his will for us.

I’m reminded of that famous prayer of St.Augustine: *“You have made us for yourself, O Lord,*

*and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.”*

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