

## The Pearl of Great Price

Cycle A - 17th Sunday of OT - July 26 2020

Last week Fr. Matthew and I drove down to Winnipeg to visit our friend Arch Bishop Albert LeGatt.  
Part of why we go every summer is that, many years ago,  
we have formed a Jesus Caritas group.  
Part of what we do in this group is take an hour to reflect and share on Sunday's gospel.

Whenever Jesus told a parable, the parable had a base in reality,  
and he took that base and spiritualized that reality.

The parable of the treasure in the field has a base in reality.

When invading armies were coming, people would bury their family treasures in the field;  
so they would not be taken.

When the armies were gone, the treasures would be dug up.

But from time to time, the family that buried a treasure, would all be killed,  
and the treasure lost...until someone came along and found it.

The parable of the pearl of great price also had a base in reality,

because if the seller was not aware the value of a particular pearl in his possession,  
a merchant would come along, buy it and sell it for a profit.

There was a time I was happy to know the history of these parables.

On my visit we were spending some time meditating on these parables,

and I was carrying my lawn chair to the beach to enjoy the day...and it struck me...

Jesus is not concerned with making more money.

There is always something more.

And all of the sudden the stars in the universe all lined up.

It was a beautiful lake day, the sun was shining.

I was at a beautiful cabin at the lake...among friends...

and I realized that I was in the parable.

I was experiencing a pearl of great price.

The parables were not about money.

Perhaps a better way to state it would be—"And they were set for life."

Not financially, but spiritually.

Finding the treasure in the field is not about finding a pot of gold.

Finding a pearl of great price is not about finding something that would look good on a neckless.

Both of these are examples of finding something that fills you,

gives you purpose in life, brings you happiness...satisfies you in every way possible.

We always talk about the kingdom of God being a treasure, and being all around us.

So how can we describe it? The treasure is the kingdom of heaven...the reign of God.

It is the realization of knowing that we belong to God, that we are cherished and cared for,

that we have been called to commit ourselves to--the noblest values of the human heart.

It is the prize that gives meaning to the present, and its fullest delight draws us into the future.

It feeds our hungers; it satisfies our thirst, it piques our curiosity.

The kingdom of heaven excites us as a child is excited at Christmas,

or a bride on the morning of her wedding.

It has the calming touch of a nursing mother, the warmth of a lovers embrace,

the approving smile of a good friend.

The reign of God is the fulfillment of our deepest desires and our fondest hopes.

Nothing in the world can compare with it,  
and that is why we are willing to sacrifice everything to attain it.

The problem is we do not always see it--even though it is right in front of our eyes.

I love the story Anthony de Mello has in his book *Song of the Birds*, it is called *The Little Fish*.

It is a conversation between a young fish and an old fish in the ocean.

It goes like this.

“Excuse me,” said the young ocean fish,

“you are older than I, so can you tell me where to find this thing called the Ocean.

“The ocean,” said the older fish,

“is the thing you are in now.”

“Oh this! But his is water. What I am seeking is the Ocean,”

said the young fish, disappointed as he swam away to search elsewhere.

This is the real teaching of these parables,

we do not have to seek out God in any special place. He is all around us.

We need only to open our eyes to see him.

Although these three parables talk about the kingdom of heaven; there is a progression among them.

In the first parable we are told the kingdom is like a treasure...

sitting there... waiting to be discovered.

And that is true, the kingdom is all around us--waiting to be discovered.

In the second parable, the implication is that the merchant is looking for a pearl.

And the implication is that we must seek out the kingdom of heaven.

We cannot wait for it to come to us, we must make some effort in seeking it out.

And the third parable reveals to us our responsibilities.

You see, when we find the kingdom of heaven,

we cannot merely sit back and bask in the comfort of knowing our God is with us.

Those are the fish that are good for nothing.

We must also use the gifts and talents that he has given to us,

to bring others to the kingdom of heaven...

because for various reasons,

they are not able to see and experience the kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps it will be through our words and actions,

that they will be able to see, and experience, the kingdom of heaven.

It has only been in the last week that I have felt that summer has finally arrived.

The warmth of the sun is prompting the gardens and crops to flourish.

Let us allow that same sun to warm us and prompt us to action.

Josh: Today you will be experiencing the kingdom of heaven in a new and exciting way.

It is my hope that in the years that follow,

you will not only grow in love for that kingdom,

but that you will also draw others to that same kingdom.