

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time- A: **"First Things First! – The Courage to Sell Everything for the Precious Pearl"**: 1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12; Rom 8:28-30; Mat 13:44-52

My treasure is apple pie. Little Mary listened intently in Sunday school while the teacher explained the parable of the "treasure" and "pearl" and gave a detailed description of eternal bliss in Heaven. She concluded her class asking the question, *"All those who are ready to go to Heaven, raise your hands."* Every hand went up except one. *"Don't you want to go to Heaven, Mary?"* asked the teacher. *"Not this minute,"* Mary replied, *"Mom was baking apple pie when I left home!"*

This makes us smile because it reflects our own hearts. We all want Heaven—but not if it means giving up the things we enjoy right now. We want the treasure, but we are often reluctant to let go of our smaller treasures. Today's readings ask each one of us a very personal question: **"What is the greatest treasure in your life?"**

In the **First Reading**, God appears to young King Solomon in a dream and says, **"Ask what I should give you"** (1 Kgs 3:5). Imagine God asking you that question tonight! Most people might ask for wealth, success, good health, influence, or a long life. But Solomon asks for something much greater: **"Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong"** (1 Kgs 3:9).

In other words, Solomon asks for **wisdom**—the ability to place God first and make the right choices. Because he sought God's will before everything else, God blessed him abundantly. Jesus later teaches the same principle: **"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides"** (Mt 6:33).

In today's **Gospel**, Jesus gives us two beautiful parables. A man discovers a treasure hidden in a field. A merchant finds a pearl of extraordinary value. What do they both do? **They joyfully sell everything** in order to possess what they have found. Notice something important. They do not sell everything because they are forced to. They do it **with joy**, because they have discovered something infinitely more valuable. The treasure is **the Kingdom of God**. The pearl is **Jesus Christ Himself**.

Unfortunately, many Christians want the pearl without selling anything. We want Christ without conversion. We want Heaven without holiness. We want forgiveness without forgiving others. We want eternal life without carrying the cross. Jesus reminds us elsewhere, **"Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be"** (Mt 6:21). If our greatest treasure is money, comfort, popularity, pleasure, or success, our hearts will remain there. But if Christ becomes our treasure, everything else finds its proper place.

St. Paul gives us great hope in the **Second Reading**: **"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God"** (Rom 8:28). Even the sacrifices we make for Christ are never wasted. God transforms every surrender into a greater blessing.

Think of **St. Paul**, who considered everything he once valued as nothing compared to knowing Christ. He writes, **"I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"** (Phil 3:8). Think of **St. Francis of Assisi**, who gave up wealth to embrace Christ and discovered a joy the world could never offer. They found the precious pearl.

So today we must honestly ask ourselves: **What is the "everything" that Jesus is asking me to sell? Perhaps it is pride that keeps me from apologizing. Perhaps resentment that prevents forgiveness. Perhaps greed, selfishness, unhealthy relationships, addiction to social media, the constant pursuit of success, or fear of trusting God completely.**

Whatever stands between us and Christ is too expensive to keep and too insignificant to compare with the treasure of God's Kingdom. Every time we come to the Eucharist, the greatest treasure is placed before us. Here, Jesus gives not merely a gift but **Himself**. This is the Pearl beyond all price. This is the Treasure hidden for the salvation of the world.

As we receive Him today, let us pray for **the wisdom of Solomon**, the **faith of the merchant**, and the **courage to put first things first**. May we joyfully let go of everything that separates us from Christ, so that **one day we may possess forever the treasure that neither moth nor rust can destroy nor thieves steal** (Mt 6:19-20). **May the Eucharist strengthen us to choose the Pearl above all pearls, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**