

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

I Kgs 3:5, 7-12

Ps 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130

Rom 8:28-30

Mt 13:44-52 or 13:44-46

John T. Denny, O.S.A.

When I was a youngster, I remember having several vivid dreams that centered on a bag of money lying on my bed, beside my feet. I would wake up reaching for my feet. I would be so disappointed to realize that I had been dreaming. I believed that if I could reach the money before I woke up, then I'd really still have it. Y I was relieved to learn in graduate school that many people have similar dreams!

In today's first Reading, Solomon has a dream. In the dream, God says to this great and powerful King, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you." Imagine such a thing B God offering us anything that we desire! Today's Gospel provides some likely answers to God's offer. We might ask for treasure, or we might ask for land, or perhaps pearls and gold and diamonds, or maybe we would ask for material surplus. Any one of them sounds like a good answer to me. These things are so appealing that Jesus uses them as images to teach us about Athe kingdom of heaven.@

Jesus is enticing us. He knows humanity. He is one of us. He knows the appeal of wealth. Our ears perk up at the mere mention of it. Jesus uses such images to grab our attention. Once He has our attention, He redirects it to that which is true wealth, to what we truly desire, that is, Athe kingdom of heaven.@

Notice that Jesus uses the word Alike.@He says that the kingdom of heaven is Alike@treasure, or that the kingdom of heaven is Alike@pearls. He wants us to conjure up those images that most appeal to us, so that we might have some sense of what God desires for us.

The kingdom of heaven is where God's law reigns. The kingdom of heaven is where peace is supreme and fear is exiled. The kingdom of heaven is where our faith is leading us. The kingdom of heaven is where the treasure is NOT hidden in a field some place where only one person can find it. Rather the treasure is out in the open, for all to partake.

And what is this treasure? This treasure is a meaningful, personal, ongoing relationship with our God. I believe that is why we are here. I believe that is why we come back to Mass week after week. At our very core, at the very essence of who we are, we desire that relationship with our God. No treasure is going to sustain that relationship, nor will pearls. Then what will?

Solomon gives us the answer. When God tells Solomon that he can have whatever he wants, Solomon does not ask for wealth. Instead, he ask for Aan understanding heart, and for the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.@

Today, as we receive the Eucharist, as we partake of God's priceless gift to us, let us ask, like Solomon, for the grace and the courage to have an understanding heart and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Such a treasure will serve us well on our journey to the kingdom of heaven.