

17th Sunday (A)

- Since the dawn of time people have been looking for treasure.
- In bygone days they searched in the fields, in the hills, under the sea ... If only they could find gold or diamonds or pearls they would be happy.
- Today people are still looking for treasure; except now they look for it in tattsлото, the casino, the stock market ... If only they could hit the jackpot, all their troubles would be over.
- In one way or another, all of us are treasure-hunters.
- All of us are looking for something that will make us completely happy.
- There is nothing wrong with that - if we were entirely happy, then artists wouldn't paint, poets, songwriters & authors would have little to write about.
- Christ encourages us in our searching as the two stories in today's Gospel show.
- Christ loved searchers - He had sympathy for those who were looking, even if they were looking in the wrong places & for the wrong things. He understood their hunger & thirst. He was able to point them in the right direction.
- But he could do nothing for the smug & the satisfied – those who claimed they had no need to search further.
- Christ compared the Kingdom of God to a rare pearl or a priceless treasure.
- In other words, the Kingdom is worth everything we have.
- Those who find it are truly fortunate.
- Even if in the eyes of the world they appear foolish & poor, in the eyes of God they are wise & rich.
- He puts it to us that the kingdom of God is the supreme value; it is to be desired more than anything else; it is to be sought, gained, & held on to at any cost; it is the number one concern in our lives.
- This is what the Gospel clearly tells us today.
- Can we truthfully say that this is really for us – that the kingdom of God is the most important thing in our lives?
- Is this really so, is the kingdom of God a thing for which we would give up everything else?
- The all-important answer to this all-important question lies in our understanding of the kingdom of God. What does it mean?
- If by "kingdom of God" we mean a kingdom of heaven someplace out there or up there, & sometime in the future after this life, something we can't see & touch & experience, something that we can't even imagine, then when we say we love & desire the kingdom of God more than anything else, I strongly suspect that we are really being insincere & untruthful.
- If, on the other hand, by "kingdom of God" we mean some concrete reality here & now, something that we experience in our daily lives, then we can say, most sincerely & most truthfully, Yes, I will give up everything on its behalf.
- Where, then, is the kingdom of God?

- It is where your ultimate concern in life is; it is in whatever you take absolutely seriously, without any reservation; & it is in what is truly life-giving in our relationships.
- Let me clarify this by way of a few modern parables.
- The kingdom of God is like a woman who gives birth to a child.
- Her complete concern in life becomes her child.
- The kingdom of God is like a man who marries a wife.
- He forgets himself entirely, & lives only for her good & happiness.
- She becomes the supreme value in his life – certainly at the beginning! But this can grow & be deepened.
- The kingdom of God is like parents who have a family.
- They take their duty to feed, raise, & educate their family absolutely seriously, without reservation, as their ultimate concern, & at any sacrifice.
- The kingdom of God is like a student for whom their studies are the most important reality because it is in this field of life that they will express their gifts.
- The kingdom of God is like a person who so loves justice that that person accepts imprisonment & even death on its behalf.
- In other words, the kingdom of God is in every good, loving, human reality & relationship to which one commits oneself completely, to which one dedicates oneself with absolute fidelity - whether that be another human being whom one loves, one's marriage, one's family, one's work or profession, or a good cause that one pursues as a life's purpose.
- There is the kingdom of God, right in that concrete, good, loving, reality; because God is goodness & love itself, & therefore God is there, in the very depths of every good & loving thing.
- And the more we become committed to that reality, the deeper we immerse ourselves in it, the more consuming our concern becomes for that person or work or cause - the more we find God.
- Ever more & more, here & now, then also & right on into eternity.
- It is what we can take into eternity, so what are your true treasures? What are the things that you want to carry with you into the life beyond this life?
- Of course, our sight can be dimmed or distracted, & we can take for granted the greatest gifts & priorities, so a time like now, during this period of the Coronavirus, can remind us of what are the most important people & things in our lives - the Kingdom of God is here & now, & grows into eternal the kingdom.
- The real treasure of life is under our noses – in the people with whom we share life, in the opportunities we face every day to put into practice the values of Jesus, the values of the Gospel.
- None of this may appear a glittering prize, but it is in the heart of the ordinary that we discover the presence of Jesus.
- He is the authentic treasure to be found & he is hidden in the common-place, hoping that we'll stumble on that truth before long.
- Or we could look at the parable in a different way.

- We have pictured ourselves as the one who finds the treasure or the pearl & who gives up everything to obtain it.
- But what about imagining God as the one who finds the treasure, & the treasure is you & those you love?
- We do not know the beauty hidden in the fields of our lives. But God does.
- Jesus came into our world & discovered a beauty in Mary of Magdala & in Peter & in the leper & in the thief on the cross which they & those around them never suspected.
- He found it & gave all he had to embrace it & unite it to God.
- As Paul says: 'he loves me & gives himself for me!'
- We are meant to live a life of intimacy with God.
- Let us continue our search for truth & for love & for real treasure.
- But let us not forget that God is the one searching for us; let us stop rushing & hiding & allow God to find us.
- Our longing for God is only a shadow of his longing for us.