

What is the Kingdom of Heaven worth to us? In light of today's Liturgy of the Word, especially the Gospel, I think this is the best question that we can ask ourselves. And you could phrase this question another way: what are we *willing* to *give up* in order to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven?

But before we answer this question, it only seems logical that we should pose another important question: *what is* the Kingdom of Heaven? Well certainly, the phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven" refers to the supreme divine gift of eternal salvation—the state of eternal union with the Triune God that exists outside of space and time in which we will enjoy perfect love, happiness, freedom, and peace. Such an eternal state is of course not guaranteed for us, but rather it's freely offered to us by our Heavenly Father and our acceptance of this gift is manifested by how we live our lives—by how we love God *and* neighbor through our thoughts, words, and actions.

Furthermore, it's important to understand that the "Kingdom of Heaven" is not merely a state of being, but also a *Person*. The Kingdom of Heaven *is* our *Lord Jesus Christ Himself*, Who *is* perfect love and

peace. Our victorious Savior *is* the *Kingdom of Heaven incarnate* in that in His Person, He enjoys a perfect union with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. So whenever we hear the phrase “the Kingdom of Heaven” or “the Kingdom of God,” especially in the Gospels, we should not think about Heaven merely as a place and a state of being, but also as a Divine Person—our Lord Jesus Christ, Who *is* our eternal salvation!

Therefore once we understand Who and what the Kingdom of Heaven is, then we can better answer the question: what are we *willing* to give up in order to receive this supreme gift from God? In the famous parables from today’s Gospel, Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to buried treasure in a field which a person finds and then hides again. We shouldn’t understand the person hiding the treasure as something negative or strange but rather as something that speaks to the great value of the treasure. During the time of Christ in 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Palestine, it was common for people to guard valuables by burying them in the ground, especially if they were hiding them from thieves or the Romans.

Moreover Jesus, says that *out of joy*, the same person *sells all that they have* in order to buy the *entire field* where the treasure was found. Now practically speaking, this just sounds unnecessary and extravagant—I mean why not just take the treasure and go, why do you have to buy the *entire field* as well? Yet Jesus is using hyperbole here to emphasize the *supreme value* of the Kingdom of Heaven and that when one finds the Kingdom of Heaven—when one truly encounters Christ, they're willing to do whatever it takes and give up whatever is necessary in order to obtain such a supreme gift. This is what it means to be a faithful disciple.

The same message applies to the second parable of the pearl of great price where the person sells *everything they have* in order to buy this *one* pearl. Now practically speaking, even though the person might not *need to sell everything they have* to get this one pearl, they're *willing* to give up everything they own in order to obtain it because of its immeasurable value.

Brothers and sisters, the whole point of these two parables is that the Kingdom of Heaven is utterly unique in that it possesses *infinite*,

*supreme value. Nothing on earth comes even remotely close* to rivaling the Kingdom of Heaven when it comes to its unique, unsurpassable value. And what Jesus is trying to get across to us as His disciples is that we should be *willing* to give up *everything we have* in order to receive Him—in order to inherit the greatest gift we could ever receive, which is the Kingdom of Heaven.

So today's Gospel is really all about the fundamental disposition and attitude of our heart. What are we willing to give up in order to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven? Or in the metaphorical words of today's parables, are we willing to "sell everything" for the Kingdom of Heaven? What is your most prized possession? Are we willing to give up our most prized possessions, whatever they might be, for the Kingdom of Heaven?

And it's important to know that this question is not restricted to material things. Another way of putting it is: are we willing to let go of any grudges and past hurts that are preventing us from inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven? Are we willing to give up sinful lifestyles for the Kingdom of Heaven? Are we willing to change our sinful ways and

repent in order to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven? Are we ready and willing to give up our “favorite sins,” if you will? What are we holding onto and refusing to let go of in order to receive the Kingdom of Heaven? “Inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven” means loving God and our neighbor with our whole heart and soul and allowing Christ to transform our life so that we can enjoy the true happiness, freedom, and peace that He wants to give us.

Brothers and sisters, as the Lord tells us in the second reading, discipleship is all about *total conformity* to Christ and His Church—it’s *not* having Christ and His Church conform to our sinfulness, our lifestyles, our ideological agendas, etc. Therefore, it’s only fitting that we be willing to give up everything for our Savior who gave up everything for us on the cross for our salvation.

In order to give up everything for the Kingdom of Heaven, we must pray for the same wisdom that King Solomon prayed for in the first reading. We need Heavenly wisdom in order to see clearly in this world and to judge what is true and false, what is right and wrong, what is

good and evil so that we don't let anything in this world prevent us from inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven—our eternal salvation.

In a few moments, we're about to encounter and receive the Kingdom of Heaven *in the Most Holy Eucharist*, which is but a mysterious, earthly taste of eternity. As we worship our Lord and Savior in this great sacrament, let's ask Him for the same wisdom of King Solomon—the wisdom to let go of anything that might be preventing us from inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the greatest gift of inestimable value and supreme worth!