

## SPIRITUALITY

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Matt 11:25

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;  
you have revealed to little ones the  
mysteries of the kingdom.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel** Matt 13:44-52; L109A

Jesus said to his disciples:

“The kingdom of heaven is like  
a treasure buried in a field,  
which a person finds and hides  
again,  
and out of joy goes and sells all  
that he has and buys that  
field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is  
like a merchant  
searching for fine pearls.

When he finds a pearl of great  
price,  
he goes and sells all that he has  
and buys it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is  
like a net thrown into the sea,  
which collects fish of every kind.

When it is full they haul it ashore  
and sit down to put what is good into  
buckets.

What is bad they throw away.

Thus it will be at the end of the age.

The angels will go out and separate the  
wicked from the righteous  
and throw them into the fiery furnace,  
where there will be wailing and  
grinding of teeth.

“Do you understand all these things?”

They answered, “Yes.”

And he replied,

“Then every scribe who has been  
instructed in the kingdom of  
heaven

is like the head of a household  
who brings from his storeroom both the  
new and the old.”

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

Ah, how many of us wouldn't consider the greatest delight in life to be winning the lottery? Or having our salary unexpectedly doubled? Or having a sugar daddy? Or having a stranger pay off our credit cards? Or hitting the jackpot in Las Vegas? Really? Would this be the greatest thing that could happen to us? In this gospel Jesus tells us that “the kingdom of heaven is like” a treasure found, a pearl of great value, a catch of fish “of every kind.” Really? Let's look deeper.

What “the kingdom of heaven is like” is not just a treasure, pearl, or fish net, not some inanimate object located in some physical place, even if these would enhance our net worth greatly. No, what the “kingdom of heaven” is really like is the action-response of a person who finds a treasure, a merchant who buys a prized pearl, or a fisherman who sorts the fish he catches. In all three of these gospel metaphors, the persons mentioned are committing themselves to an action-response. The “kingdom of heaven” is present in searching for, sacrificing for, and sorting for our greatest Treasure—God's very Life. We must “sell” all that we are—empty ourselves—so the Life God gives us freely and lavishly is ours forever.

The “kingdom of heaven” is visible in our seeking God above everyone and everything else, in our sacrificing ourselves and whatever we have so that others can have what they need to live fruitful and holy lives, in our sorting out who we are and how we are in relation to God and others. The treasure we go out to seek isn't some *thing* in some *place*; it is nothing less than the very *Presence and Life of God* that is breaking in upon us now but which is only fully realized in the future. Now here is where the surprise of the gospel comes in: the kingdom of heaven isn't some object or realm

that we can identify *physically*; instead it is the gift of divine Presence and Life God gives us. God's divine Presence and Life given to us is a free, unexpected, and invaluable gift. It far surpasses any treasure, pearl, or great catch. It far surpasses anything we can imagine. It far surpasses even who we think we are. The “kingdom of heaven” is the gift of God's very Self to us that raises us up to a share in divine joy, worth, and righteousness.

Isn't it a beautiful thing that God even asks us what we want (first reading: “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.”)? This shows how much God cares for us. It confirms that God chooses to be involved in the affairs of humankind. It reveals God's abiding Presence to us. This is the kingdom of heaven: God's Presence and Life.

**Living the Paschal Mystery**

This “treasure” does have its cost: we must actively search for it, recognize it when we find it, and sort out all the distractions that keep us from recognizing the treasure. In the gospel the seekers go out to obvious places to find the treasure. For us our discovery of the “kingdom of heaven” is most often in our everyday circumstances when we experience overwhelmingly the in-breaking of God's Presence. This may be something so simple as the smile of a person's grateful thanks or the sense of rightness that comes with fidelity to daily prayer. It may be something more challenging as admitting that we've hurt another. It may be demanding such as committing time to help those in need. The “kingdom of heaven” demands our all—and nothing less.



or Matt 13:44-46 in Appendix A, p. 296.

**Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** The kingdom of heaven is like, treasure, searching, finds, sells all that he has, what is good . . . What is bad

**To the point:** What “the kingdom of heaven is like” is not just a treasure, pearl, or fish net. What the “kingdom of heaven” is really like is the action-response of a person who finds a treasure, a merchant who buys a prized pearl, or a fisherman who sorts the fish he catches. The “kingdom of heaven” is present in searching for, sacrificing for, and sorting for our greatest Treasure—God’s very Life. We must “sell” all that we are—empty ourselves—so the Life God gives us freely and lavishly is ours forever.

**Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** Like Solomon we must ask God for wisdom. This wisdom is needed to make the choices in our daily living that enable us to live in the “kingdom of heaven.”

**to experience:** We are easily fooled about what has true and lasting value. For example, we max out credit cards buying things we covet, yet none of these things in themselves bring us wisdom, understanding, joy, lasting satisfaction, knowledge of right and wrong, just judgments. Only living in the Presence of God (that is, in God’s kingdom) has true and lasting value.

**Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** With 176 verses, Psalm 119 is the longest of the psalms. It contains twenty-two sections, each beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Within each section there are eight verses, each beginning with the letter assigned to that section. Furthermore, the psalm uses eight terms for the law: way, law, decrees, commands, precepts, statutes, ordinances, words. It is clear that Psalm 119 is an extended meditation on the law, not intended to be prayed in one sitting, but savored, section by section, over the course of a lifetime.

The use of verses from Psalm 119 on this Sunday suggests that the law itself is a treasure of great price and rich reward, a guide to discernment of what is good and true, a storeroom of wisdom old and new (gospel). Solomon’s request for “an understanding heart” (first reading) could only have come from one for whom the law was already a source of strength and a guide to discernment. In singing this psalm we, too, acknowledge God’s Law as the guide of our lives and the treasure of our hearts.

**to psalmist preparation:** As you prepare to sing this Sunday’s psalm, spend some time examining how you see God’s law. Do you see the law as a list of “dos and don’ts” which put limits on what you would like to have and to do, or do you see it as a guide to rich, relational living? Your answer depends on where you believe true treasure lies. Pray this week for the grace to see the law of God as the guidebook to finding the greatest Treasure of all, God’s very Life.

**ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS**

- When I reflect on my choices and actions in daily living, I learn my treasure is . . .
- To live in the “kingdom of heaven,” I am willing to give my all to . . .
- For me, the “kingdom of heaven” is like . . .

**PRESIDERS**

I best lead people to the Treasure of incomparable value when I . . .

**DEACONS**

My serving others embodies my searching for, sacrificing for, and sorting for the “kingdom of heaven” when I . . .

**HOSPITALITY MINISTERS**

My manner of greeting those gathering invites them to seek the incomparable Treasure offered in liturgy when . . .

**MUSIC MINISTERS**

The price I have to pay to do my music ministry well is . . . The Treasure I find as reward is . . .

**ALTAR MINISTERS**

What of myself I must “sell” in order for my serving to more fully reveal the presence of the “kingdom of heaven” is . . .

**LECTORS**

My prayer and preparation of the word are ways of seeking “an understanding heart . . . to distinguish right from wrong” (first reading) when . . .

**EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION**

My manner of distributing Holy Communion makes visible the “kingdom of heaven” when I . . .