

## 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A Mt 13:44-52

### Ferntree Gully Newsletter 2020

St Ignatius of Loyola writes in his Spiritual Exercises ('Principle and Foundation' that has influenced the 2nd question of the Catechism of the Catholic Church – here paraphrased by David Fleming SJ):

The goal of our life is to live with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life. Our own response of love allows God's life to flow into us without limit. All the things in this world are gifts of God, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily. As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God insofar as they help us develop as loving persons. But if any of these gifts become the centre of our lives, they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some obligation. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.

Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening his life in me.

St Ignatius is attempting to offer a commentary on the dictum that Jesus had proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount, "Set your hearts on his kingdom first... and all these other things will be given you as well" (Mt 6:33). These lines were so literal for Solomon as we heard in the first reading of today.

Today's gospel is a continuation of Jesus' use of parables to teach us about the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it is a call to be as wise as Solomon. Without wisdom, we can neither understand the parables of Christ, nor seek the kingdom of God. Today's good news is also a call to value what is most precious to us, and for which God has chosen us.

Today's parables are intended to instruct us to prefer *the kingdom of heaven* to this world, and to ensure that nothing prevents us from entering into it. Through these parables, Christ reminds us of the excellence and beauty of eternal life. The kingdom of God is indeed a treasure hidden from the wise of this world. Only those who are wise according to God's standard look for it, and find it. To find it, we must first value it, and when we have found it, we must hide it in our hearts.

In the gospel, Jesus elaborates by means of two parables his own injunction to seek first the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is like treasure hidden in a field, you cannot attain it unless you sell all you have in order to take possession of the field; thus, you show how much you value that treasure (Mt 13:44). The Kingdom of God is like a precious pearl, you cannot possess it unless you sell all you have in order to be with it; thus, you show how much the pearl is important for you (Mt 13:45).

I am created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). And my heart is constantly thirsting to be one with its Origin. Therefore, the goal of my life is to be with God for ever – to be part of the Kingdom of God. I need to prioritise this. All things – my wealth and possessions, my family and relationships, my degrees and achievements – are only the means to reach this goal of my life: To be one with God for ever. And the ‘ever’ begins now! It is already here!

Let us ask God for understanding and wisdom as Solomon did, so that we may be wise enough to discern what is good for us, and to make God’s kingdom our priority.