

# Read

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

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

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52 or  
13:44-46

## LIVING THE WORD

### Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 26, 2020



#### REFLECTION

The meanings of Jesus' parables are not found in the gritty details. In today's Gospel, for example, the images Jesus uses are not so significant in themselves. Instead of focusing on treasures, pearls and fish, Jesus invites us to look at the major similarity between each of the images. A person who discovers a treasure in a field does so through his or her daily chores of tending the land and cultivating the area. A person who finds a wonderful pearl did so through his or her daily labor of collecting pearls. Finally, a person who finds large, good-looking fish does so because he or she fishes for a living.

Each of the discoveries in these parables are found through one's ordinary, everyday tasks. This same is true for our discovery and experience of the Kingdom of God. We do not need to go to great lengths to encounter God. In fact, we do not need to do anything out of the ordinary. Instead, God invites us to recognize and build God's Kingdom through the things we do every day. As students we encounter and build God's Kingdom in the classroom and on the athletic fields. As sisters and brothers we encounter and build God's Kingdom within our homes and families. As Christians we encounter and build God's Kingdom in all of our everyday actions.



#### ACTION

Just as today's Gospel describes, God is not found randomly or unexpectedly. Instead, God is found in what we encounter and experience each day. Keep a log this week of all the times you encounter God. Remember, we do not necessary encounter God in huge, life-changing events. Rather, we encounter God in dozens, if not hundreds, of little ways each day. At the end of the week, review your log of "God encounters" and thank God for his love and presence in each of those experiences.



*"The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus."*

—Pope Francis

#### ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Why is it sometimes difficult to encounter God in the ordinary but much easier to find God in the extraordinary?
- ❖ How would you describe God's Kingdom to a friend who had never heard of it?



July 26, 2020

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### LECTIONARY #109A

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

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

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52 or 13:44-46

### Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Two of the shortest parables that Jesus uses to teach comprise the entirety of the shorter option for today's Gospel reading. One centers on finding great treasure in a field; the other recalls a merchant who finds a valuable pearl. Both concern the ultimate value contained within the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Q FOCUS:** Find your treasure in Christ.

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

July 31 is the Memorial of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a soldier who experienced conversion while recovering from having his leg shattered by a cannonball. As a priest, he went on to found a new religious community, the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. His mystical insight was influential on spirituality.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Those who find [the Kingdom of God] have no doubts, they sense that this is what they have been seeking and waiting for; and this is what fulfills their most authentic aspirations. . . . To seek Jesus, to find Jesus: this is the great treasure!" (Pope Francis, Angelus Address, 27 July 2014).

### Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Matthew 13:44-46

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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."

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Two very short parables, which together are only three verses long, comprise the entirety of the shorter version of today's Gospel reading. But there is a profound message that Jesus is delivering in this brief passage.

### ► What do you remember about what a parable is?

We have been hearing a lot of parables from Jesus on Sundays recently.

### ► What has stuck out for you in your mind about the message that Jesus has been sharing through his telling of parables?

The two brief parables in today's reading share the same message. They center upon how valuable the Kingdom of Heaven is. In both cases, something that is very much prized by its owner is cherished for the worth that it contains. The first of the two stories centers on a valuable treasure that is found in a field. The second focuses on a pearl of immense worth. Both stories portray an individual who recognizes the extreme value in each of these precious items. Think of your life.

### ► What is the one possession that you value the most?

### ► How would you feel to have lost that possession?

### ► How would your feelings change if you found that item again after it had been lost?

Both of these stories that Jesus shares follow a similar pattern. First, something that is precious is sought out and found. Second, the person who found that precious item sells his or her own goods in order to be able to afford that valuable item. And lastly, a financial transaction is made that allows the person to obtain that prized commodity. Place yourself in each of these stories.

### ► Can you relate to either of these instances?

Reflect upon the feelings that you've had when there is something that you really, really want to possess.

### ► What were those feelings like?

### ► How did you respond to wanting that possession?

Through the use of these two short parables, Jesus shares with us that finding entry into the Kingdom of Heaven requires all of these steps of finding the precious item (being caught up in love with Jesus), selling all that you have that is not as worthwhile (examining our lives and stripping away what is unnecessary, even if it means giving up our earthly possessions), and then making the purchase that allows one to actually obtain that valuable possession (having given up all that is unnecessary, one now gives his or her all to be able to be in full relationship with God).

We are ultimately asked to give up what is most important to us in order to fully be able to enter into what is being offered to us by Jesus Christ. Entry into the Kingdom of Heaven is not without its price, but the trade-off for doing so is so worthwhile.

### ► What is it that you need to give up in order to find that valuable entry into the Kingdom?

As is mentioned in the first of these two parables, finding the Kingdom is sure to find the fullness of joy.

### ► How might you open yourself up to the possibility of experiencing that fullness of joy?

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 238.*

**What are the things in your life that you are attached to which you ultimately are called to give up in order to fully follow Jesus?**

**How do you think that Jesus' offering of the kingdom can bring ultimate joy to your life?**

# Act on the Word

## **Congratulations! You're the Next Contestant on *The Price Is Right!***

*You will need a package of chocolate chip cookies for this activity (provide gluten free cookies for those who are intolerant and be sure to make sure no peanut oil is used in the recipe). Prior to playing the game, write the price that the cookies cost on a piece of paper and enclose it in an envelope. On the front of the envelope, write, "Price of Cookies Inside."*

Gather the young people and tell them that you are going to play a game show, just like one that has been on television for a number of decades. Ask the group, "Has anyone ever seen the television game show *The Price is Right*?" If someone has seen it before, invite them to tell the rest of the group about the show: how the game is played, what some of the rules are, how one can win the game, and so on. If none of the youth have seen the show before, you can introduce it to them. Make sure to include the key details that the focus of the game is to correctly identify the right price of an item, or to get close to identifying the right price of an item, without guessing over the actual price.

Tell the youth that you as a group are going to play a brief version of this game together. Present a package of cookies to the group and tell them that they are going to play the Price is Right to determine the cost of these cookies, without going over in price.

Start with a price that is an even dollar amount that is greater than the actual price of the cookies. For example, if the cookies actually cost \$3.49, say, "Who thinks that the price of these cookies is \$4?" For those who raise their hands, you can tell them, "Nope! These cookies are not four dollars, and you have actually guessed that they cost more than they actually do. So you are out of this round of the game." Next, drop the price that you are offering substantially, by saying, "Who thinks that these

cookies cost more than \$1?" Everyone who raises their hands gets to stay in the game. Next, raise the value to \$2, and then go up incrementally. Once you get above \$3, be more specific and target the actual price. Once you get to the actual amount of the cookies, ask that price. If someone guesses correctly, open the envelope to reveal the actual price.

Have a discussion with the youth about the game. Ask them, "When you truly think about it, who thinks that [insert actual cost of the cookies that you have] is a lot of money for what you are actually getting in return? How much are we willing to pay for special treats in our lives?" Then, turn the discussion to focus on the message conveyed in today's Gospel. The person in each brief story sells all that he has in order to be able to obtain the precious treasure that he seeks. Ask, "What would you be willing to give up in order to achieve this greatest of treasures possible, the Kingdom of Heaven?" Spend some time in discussion about how they view the Kingdom of Heaven as viewed through the lens of the short parables presented today, and share the cookies during the process!

## **Closing Prayer**

*God of love,  
you have riches and wealth beyond our wildest  
dreams awaiting us.*

*May we give thanks to you and take steps toward  
life with you each time happiness touches  
our heart.*

*Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

## **For Next Sunday**

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*