

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A) Homily

St. William, Champion | July 26, 2020

Deacon Bob Mintus

1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12 | Rom 8:28-30 | Mt 13:44-52

I don't think there is a person out there who doesn't love the excitement of treasure. If you turn on the TV, there are a lot of shows that cover the subject. Maybe it's American Pickers, or Pawn Stars, or Storage Wars, Civil War Gold, or the Curse of Oak Island. Or maybe your taste runs to the movies... Maybe you enjoyed one of the National Treasure movies, or Romancing the Stone, or one of the Raiders of the Lost Ark or Pirates of the Caribbean movies. Or let's backup a bit and think of something else. Just this week, a young man I know found a \$100 bill...

If you take a moment and close your eyes, it's easy to think about the fun and excitement of finding treasure. It's part of the fun of shopping at clearance sales, second hand stores, or thrift shops – the fun of finding something wonderful for next to nothing. But let's think bigger. Treasure is about things that are life-changing, things that our lives wouldn't be the same without.

Perhaps we could think of other things that we truly do treasure. If tonight our house caught on fire, leaving us precious little time to grab a couple of things on our way out to safety, what things would we try to take with us? Maybe it might be a prized trophy, a craft made by a relative or friend that is irreplaceable, a picture or video of our loved ones or friends, or a special gift that was made just for us...

Or maybe your treasure is not something that can be held. Growing up, one of my favorite songs from the 1970's was Everything I Own, written by David Gates, in which he sings the refrain:

I would give anything I own, Give up my life, my heart, my home,

I would give everything I own, Just to have you back again.

Like many others at the time, I thought it was about a broken relationship, only to find out later that he had written the song in memory of his father, who died before his son experienced success as a recording artist.

Jesus talks to us today about how the Kingdom of Heaven is a treasure; how it is worth more than anything else, to the point where it

makes sense to give up everything else that we could have instead... where it becomes the clear “first choice” in our lives.

Over the past several months since the word pandemic became a part of our vocabulary, we’ve had to make some difficult decisions that say a lot about what is important to us. We’ve had to deal with inconvenience as things were cancelled or rescheduled. We’ve had to put aside personal freedoms to help protect the health of ourselves and others. For many of us, we’ve never had to face the fact that there are limited quantities of items. We’ve seen people hoarding various kinds of treasure, from bottled water, to meat, to toilet paper.

The wonderful thing about the Kingdom of Heaven that makes it unlike any treasure on earth, however, is that it is unlimited. It never expires or spoils, has no blackout periods or quotas, and there’s no fine print. Jesus came to extend God’s mercy to every person without limits and open the Kingdom of Heaven to include each one of us. There is room in the Kingdom for everyone who **wants to be there**.

For many of us, that's hard to comprehend. We are imperfect people who think of finite things and possessions. Yet the greatest gift – eternal life – is available to all of us... And it's something we can never hope to buy or possess; it's just something that we have to reach our hands out to receive, just like we do at Eucharist.

Jesus question, "Do you understand?" applies to us as well. In opening our hands to receive a great treasure, we find that we have to let go of other things which we may be holding onto. We may not even realize that these things are holding us back.

So as we continue our journey this week seeking treasure, may we realize that the greatest treasure is yet to come – the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us open our hands and hearts so that we may claim it.