

INTRO

Today's readings are about wisdom, the true wisdom which is a gift of God. Jesus says that having it is worth more than anything else in the whole world. The buried treasure, or the pearl of great price stand for the wisdom that comes from seeking God's kingdom and his ways. We come seeking this gift this morning/evening; but so often, human beings seem to seek that which is not God as the ultimate purpose of their lives. So often, as a result, we make the wrong choices. So we need God's mercy and the help of his grace and forgiveness. Let us then acknowledge our sins.

HOMILY

For the third week running, we have been hearing Jesus teaching in parables, the parables of the Kingdom of heaven, as they are known, from Matthew chapter 13.

The first two parables today show what should be the response to the kingdom – we should receive it with joy and gratitude. The kingdom is like treasure hidden in a field, or like an especially valuable pearl. But these parables also highlight a mystery – the same mystery which underlies the mixture of the good and the bad in the parable of the fishing net - if the kingdom is so valuable, why do some people reject it?

In the two stories, the reaction of the person discovering the treasure is the same - he sells all that he has in order to obtain it. This shows the attitudes that are necessary to gain the treasure - detachment, the willingness to give up what we have, and generosity in offering it all up to God, and renunciation of everything that gets in the way, obstacles we create between ourselves and God.

These are obstacles can all be summed up in one word - self. We must be free from attachment to self so that we can become free for attachment to Christ.

The parable of the fishing net which encloses both good fish and bad is like last week's parable of the field with wheat and weeds growing together. It too explains why perhaps some people reject the gospel of the kingdom.

As in that parable, God's kingdom is present is a world where both good and evil exist – this is allowed to continue until the end of time, when there will be a judgement and a separation.

For the present, both are together until God's time is achieved - last week, this was described in the parable as being when the field was ripe for harvest; today's parable shows the fishermen waiting until the net is full before the separation takes place.

So what can we learn from the readings this week? Maybe they can be summed up in just a few words – the search for true wisdom, we must seek the gift of wisdom.

The temptation of our world, where the wisdom of the Kingdom is unknown, is to propose many little idols for people's adoration: riches, possessions, power, fame, beauty, youth, these things have been made into gods before whom our world worships and adores each day. I am not saying we should despise all these things. Those

who have the gift of wisdom don't despise anything because they know that everything is God's creation. They simply give each thing its proper place. The problem comes when your whole life is devoted to getting and keeping all these worldly things, so that nothing else and no-one else matters – that is the opposite of seeking wisdom and it is a recipe for disaster.

The invitation to seek the kingdom of God is an invitation to allow authentic wisdom to rule our hearts. Seeking this pearl of great price, this hidden treasure is what gives our lives authenticity and meaning.