



Seeing the Value  
17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, A  
July 29, 2017  
4:30 p.m. (Notre Dame Motherhouse), 10:00 a.m., 12 Noon

1. A 17 year old boy was playing basketball in his driveway with his friends
  - in the course of the game, he lost one of his contact lenses
  - he searched up and down the driveway to find it without success
  - so he gave up and went into the house to tell his mom
  - she undertook the cause and went out to look again
  - in just a few minutes she came in holding the contact lens in her hand
  - “I don’t get it,” said the boy. “I looked everywhere. How did you do that?”
  - “Well,” she explained, “we were looking for different things. You were looking for a small piece of plastic. I was looking for \$300!”
  - What we value determines the search.
  
3. In Matthew’s Gospel today, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a discovered treasure
  - this was a frequent experience in the war-torn ancient Near East
  - at the approach of an army, people hid their valuables in secret places with the intent to collect them after the conflict
  - this wasn’t always possible, and even today, archeologists often discover stashes in caves, cisterns, and ruins throughout ancient lands
  - discovered treasure was so common in Jesus’ day that several laws were dedicated to it
  - in general, the treasure became the property of the landowner, not the finder
  - which is why the person in the parable must sacrifice everything to purchase the field
  
4. The second parable teaches a similar lesson
  - a merchant, looking at the offerings of pearl divers, recognizes a “pearl of great price”
  - the pearl divers know they have a great find, and the merchant liquidates every asset to purchase it
  - the merchant realizes he can net a huge profit from customers unable to buy from the divers directly, making the temporary sacrifice well worth the effort
  
5. There are many lessons to be learned from these parables and images
  - but I’d like to focus on four of them
  1. The value of the kingdom is not apparent to the untrained eye
    - the treasure hunter and merchant had special insights that revealed the value of their discovery
    - in the same way, disciples of Jesus should be able to recognize the kingdom when they find it
    - do you seek the kingdom with a telescope or with a wide-angled lens?
    - are you able to God at work in your life?
    - I often pray for wisdom to discover God’s presence in my day and I’m

- often surprised by grace in ways and places I least expected to discover it
- I keep a journal and jot down song lyrics, words written or spoken to me, insights, reflections from reading Scripture or just ways God is speaking to me
- and it's amazing how it trains me to see God at work

2. The kingdom of God requires searching out

- faith requires work, spirituality requires practice, the ability to see differently requires a learning process we must be willing to engage in
- let's face it – advertisers and media are expert in convincing us to buy a certain product, woo us to want a select thing, fix the value of what we deem important
- but how does faith influence our decisions and choices?
- how does the Gospel message affect our ability to see what's of value and what is not?
- do you work to have inner peace? freedom from conflict?
- where do you find your joy? your hope? your capacity for goodness?

3. Third, the kingdom of God requires a certain boldness, and courage

- some people want something so badly but lack the courage to seek it out
- the treasure hunter and merchant were willing to take significant financial risks to achieve their goals
- athletes make tremendous sacrifices to succeed, parents give up so much to make sure kids get to soccer practice, dance class, piano recitals
- faith doesn't always give the quick fix or the instant answer we may be looking for
- rather it is a kind of spiritual training that makes us enlightened for the long haul, undaunted by the negativity of the world and filled with a grace that rises above
- the benefit of faith is more subtle, it's a way of life that gives stability, wisdom, insight, compassion, mercy, understanding
- these are the kinds of values prayed for by Solomon in the first reading today
- beyond material things, they are the pearls of great price for the person willingness to work at achieving it

D. Finally, present sacrifices express hope in a future joy

- Jesus emphasizes both the material and spiritual abundance that result from our adversities
- many people undergo hardship for financial gain
- Jesus invites his disciples to do the same to attain the kingdom
- we cannot make the world a better, happier place if we do not also aspire for this in our own lives
- suffering is part of everyone's life but the attitude we use to face it can make all the difference in the world
- if we set our sights on heaven; then this world's suffering is put in perspective and doesn't consume or overwhelm us

6. Faith is more than a small piece of plastic

- it is a pearl of great price
- and like a good mom knows, you keep searching until you find it
- for what we value, determines the search and brings lasting results

