

Seventeenth Sunday of the Year, Sunday 26 July

The Gospel reading (Matthew 13:44-52) asks a very simple question of us, what is our 'treasure of great price'? The past few months have given many of us the opportunity to reflect on the priorities of our own lives and to ask ourselves about how we value the many things that we have missed. Where does our faith and the things of the 'kingdom of heaven' fit into that picture?

The church in today's liturgy gives us not only the Gospel reading but two other readings also. In the First Reading (1 Kings 3:5.7-12) we hear about King Solomon who succeeded his father David as king whilst still a young man. Solomon asks for the gift of wisdom and his prayer is answered. During his reign Solomon achieves many things including the building of the First Temple in Jerusalem, but as he grew old his wisdom faded and he lost the favour of God. He is an example and a warning that we must never take wisdom for granted, but in the words of today's responsorial psalm continue to 'love the law of God.'

The Second Reading (Romans 8:28-30) is taken from St Paul's letter to Romans and continues our reading of chapter 8 of this letter which we have been following for the past few weeks. If you want to do some further Scripture reading this week why not look up this chapter and read it all. In it St Paul speaks of the 'life of the Spirit' and how we must seek to direct our lives according to the Spirit. This is what Solomon did to begin with but failed to keep up later in his life. Whereas his first treasure was 'law of God' as he got older he forsook that treasure as he pursued other more worldly aims.

In this week's Second Reading St Paul tells us how God can 'turn everything to the good of those who love him'. Can we apply that thought even to the situation in which we find ourselves in today? As I am sure I have said before we should not speak of the pandemic as being 'the will of God'. God does not will suffering and hurt. Too many people have lost their lives and God suffers alongside the suffering and weeps alongside the grieving. However God sometimes not only permits suffering but even allows us to draw spiritual benefit from it, in other words 'turning it to our good'. A number of people have recounted how the time of lockdown has enabled them to begin to pray again or to deepen their life of prayer. Others have told how it has enabled them to re-evaluate what is the true treasure of their lives and to change their priorities accordingly. Others still have found a renewed opportunity to reach out in love to those in need. Yes, God can even draw good from this pandemic if we are willing to co-operate with his purposes.

So what is our true treasure and what are we prepared to do to realise it? We pray for the gift of wisdom, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to help us to know and understand. We ask the Spirit to guide our lives in the ways of God so that we may know and experience his glory both in the present and in the wonderful future that God has in store for us.

<https://youtu.be/lZ7lwe63DoU>

<https://www.churchservices.tv/lincoln/archive/uploads/QF4gepUixD>