

#### 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time - (7/27/08)

Would you recognize a treasure if you saw it? If I told you there was a treasure in the church building, would you look for it? Two of the parables in today's gospel speak of people finding a treasure that others don't see. What makes them able to see when others can't? Of course, a buried treasure is out of sight. In the parable, it just seems to appear by good luck, maybe after a storm has washed away loose dirt around it. With the pearl, the merchant is trained and can recognize the value of a fine pearl when he sees it. In both cases, the finding is an unforeseen blessing.

The parables remind us that the kingdom of heaven is not something that we earn but rather that falls into our lap as a gift from God. All we need is a humble heart with wise eyes to recognize the value of the gift in order to receive it. One of my favorite phrases from a teacher in the seminary is, "God's grace is always already there." God's grace is all around us like buried treasure, and all we have to do is accept it humbly. Or to put it another way, we need the wisdom of a trained and obedient heart to recognize God's gifts all around us. In the middle of summer, let us open our eyes to look for God's great gifts all around us, in our families, friends, church, work, supermarket, etc. Then amazed by what we rediscover, let us praise the Lord with joyful hearts! Amen!

#### 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time - (7/20/08)

Since it is summer, I guess it is appropriate to hear parables about growing. Jesus was very aware of how to use the everyday experiences of the people to try to explain the invisible God at work in a visible world. Most of us have some experience of plants and weeds. Jesus points out God's patience in allowing the weeds and the good seed to grow together. This is where the metaphor breaks down. Seed and weeds don't have free will, they will become what they are programmed to become by their genetic makeup. But humans have free will, and therefore "weeds" can become good plants (and sadly, vice versa) through acceptance of God's grace.

The important thing to remember about God's plan for humanity is that our time is limited. God gives us only so much time and we need to use that time to become fruitful in the garden of the Lord. In Time, all things are constantly changing. The only thing that is certain is God's love for us. Let us make sure this summer is a time for us to grow closer to God's love and be fruitful witnesses for our neighbors. Amen!

#### 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time - (7/13/08)

John's gospel begins with the familiar words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..." These words give us the background for calling Jesus the "Word of God." Isaiah tells us that God's Word is effective and accomplishes what it was sent for. It is doubtful that Isaiah was thinking about Jesus but rather the will of God. As Genesis tells us, God spoke and creation came into existence.

The coming of Jesus was the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for humanity. Now it only remains for humanity to accept or reject.

The parable of the Sower and the Seed (or more appropriately The Soil) is about the different reactions to God's offer of salvation. Some don't accept, some hear and accept temporarily, and some accept and become extremely fruitful in responding to God's offer in overwhelming joy. The soil also reminds us of humanity's relationship with nature (creation). Paul reminds us that just as creation suffers as a result of the sin of humanity (Genesis 3:17), it also awaits the fullness of redemption that comes after humanity's redemption.

Jesus uses parables to explain the teachings of His Father but only the humble of heart can learn from them. Those who are too busy with their lives to contemplate the mystery of God at work in time will lose out. Let us be attentive this summer, this time of growth for creation, that it may be a time of growth in the Lord for us also. Amen!

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time - (7/6/08)

Happy 4th of July Weekend! I hope everyone is able to enjoy some relaxation. I guess it is most appropriate that Jesus speaks of giving rest to those who are burdened. Many of us have felt an overwhelming burden at some point in our life. For most, time passes and the burden eases. But some people carry heavy burdens for a long time. Jesus reminds us that God does not wish us to carry some of these horrible burdens but to trust in His love and healing power to help us lighten our burdens.

As we enjoy this holiday weekend let us also remember all the people who have helped make this country and who are serving today in some capacity to help us live just lives. May God bless us in our continuing efforts to make this a country that respects and protects all human life and promotes equality and justice for all. May we learn to submit ourselves to God's will and truly be one nation under God. Amen.