



Seventeenth Sunday Ordinary Time 2005.

1 Kings 3:5-12 Romans 8: 28-30 Matthew 13: 44-52

This passage from Romans has been presented as a kind of fatalistic approach to life. It doesn't matter what you do everything is already decided. We are a kind of ROM computer disk; the text is set it cannot be altered. This of course is not true. The Jews understood God as a God of Order. The universe has wondrous patterns which cause us to marvel at the connections within and among all creation.

Paul outlines in a series of steps the unfolding of the journey into the likeness of Christ which he sees as our imaging of God. Paul believes that, no matter what happens in our life, God can use it for good. In other words God will always cooperate with love, no matter how feeble our efforts.

This is an extension of the previous idea about us not being good judges of people. What we might judge as a physical or moral disaster in our lives can be used for good if we keep on trying to be faithful.

God's sustaining love has always surrounded us: before we were born, in our calling to be Gospel people; in our faltering responses; in our efforts to be faithful; therefore God will be with us in the final stage as well, that is our entering into glory.

Jesus was first born of a large family. A family comprising people of all nations who believe in a world based on God's vision, *the reign of God*.

It is by our attentive reading of the scriptures that we are able to increase our understanding of how we might share in this vision. We do not engage in this search alone, but in the company of those who have studied, discussed, prayed and shared over many centuries and across many cultures.

We are blessed today because there are so many good resources available to enhance our hearing of the Word.

In the gospels Jesus hints at the vision of God through stories and images. Today two are given. The treasure and the pearl are linked as they carry a similar theme.

The reign of God is like pounamu, opals or diamonds. these are gifts of the earth. It takes a practiced eye to discern the true from the false. Cutting reveals the beauty which lies beneath the dross.

The reign of God is like a dealer's search for that one really rare and valuable pearl. These parables speak of a strong commitment, a passion which can override other considerations. The person who shares God's vision for a just, cooperative, kind world will learn to search for ways to bring this vision to light.

The story from 1 Kings gives us a picture of a man who sought to understand God's ways. Solomon, a man whose name is now synonymous with wisdom had a dream in which he was in conversation with God. God said, "Ask for anything and it is yours." Solomon acknowledges that he has already many gifts from God so asks for a gift that would benefit God's people. He asks for wisdom, the gift of discernment. The hidden treasure and the pearl show us that the gifts of God are all around us. Sometimes that are not immediately obvious. Ask for help to recognize and use yours.

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