

6th Week After Pentecost – Friday

Matthew 13:44-54 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. 47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: 48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. 52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. 53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. 54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

The following are notes about a portion of this Gospel.

The parables about the Kingdom variously describe the power of the Gospel to save, the great worth of the Gospel, and the way of living that those who will attain the Kingdom must have.

"And the former indeed, of the leaven and of the mustard seed, was spoken with a view to the power of the gospel, and to its surely prevailing over the world; but these declare its value, and great price." (St John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew, Homily XLVII, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf110.iii.XLVII.html>)

Each parable gives us a different piece of information. We must believe in the ability of God to save us, must value the way of the Kingdom above all else, and must live in a certain way.

One must be careful to not over analyze any parable, otherwise, according to St John: "the parables must not be explained throughout word for word, since many absurdities will follow." (Ibid)

The parable of the field is a good example. In the parable, the field is the world. Remembering the proscription against worldliness, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?", (Mat 16:26) one wonders, why would the Lord urge us to buy the world?

It is because, as St John teaches, the Gospel is hidden within the world. The treasure is

this Gospel. The way of life that leads to eternal life is hidden within the world; those who do not believe do not usually even see it, and when they do, it is "foolishness" to them. We fulfill the resurrection within us, by living the way of life in the world. We need the world in order to be saved. If it were not for the temptations and difficulties of the world, we would not value the treasure that is hidden within it. This is our nature; we forget easily, and become inured to Holy things, unless we continually struggle, and have temptations, and do everything possible to attain the treasure in the world.

The parable of the pearl says the same thing as the parable of the field, with an important addition: there is only one truth.

"One seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one of great price, sold all and bought it. For the truth is one, and not in many divisions." (Ibid)

The size of the pearl is also of great importance. The Gospel treasure is very small (it is hidden in our heart), so those in the world cannot see it, and see that we are truly rich.

"And much as he that hath the pearl knows indeed himself that he is rich, but others know not, many times, that he is holding it in his hand (for there is no corporeal bulk); just so also with the gospel, they that have hold of it know that they are rich, but the unbelievers, not knowing of this treasure, are in ignorance also of our wealth." (Ibid)