

Commentary on the Readings for July 30, 2023

The 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The theme of today's readings is the ***Kingdom of God***. This "Kingdom" is none other than being in the presence of God Himself, spiritually speaking, of course. However, if Jesus were to preach or teach about it in that way, the people of His time would have had more difficulty understanding it than we do today. So, Jesus used parables, brief sketches of daily life, or symbols, things that people of any era could identify with. So, what are we to learn when listening to these readings? Where is the Kingdom in our life today? For us, this kingdom begins by finding out what gifts God has given us, or by asking for some special gift from God for the benefit of others as well as ourselves, and then using them for His honor and glory.

In the **First Reading**, from the ***First Book of Kings (3:5-12)***, we hear how King Solomon inherits the throne of his father, David, at a very young age. This is an awesome task and Solomon knows he is not mature enough to fulfill it properly. God offers divine help but disguises it within an offer of anything that Solomon might want. Solomon asks for ***wisdom and knowledge*** to enable him to serve God and His people as God would want him to. When we fulfill our duties as God would want us to do, we are then in His presence and on the threshold of the Kingdom.

The **Responsorial Psalm (119)** picks up the theme of the joy that comes from obedience to the will of God, and fulfilling our role in His Plan of Salvation. This "Plan" is, in reality, God's desire to bring everyone back to the "kingdom," but He will not force us. We must choose to be with God and want to be heading toward the Kingdom.

In the **Second Reading**, from ***St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (8:28-30)***, we hear one of Paul's strange statements; but his insight into the ways of the Kingdom was far better than ours, so we have to dig a little to find out what he means. The "all things work together, etc." is straight forward, and means that regardless of how confusing or difficult daily life might get, if we are following in the footsteps of Christ then they will head us to the Kingdom of the Father. The second part says that all mankind is destined for heaven. This is not predestination, as some people believe. It means that God's original intention (and still existing desire) is for all mankind to be with Him in heaven; but only those who fulfill what is asked of them will reach the throne of God.

The Gospel Reading from ***Matthew (13:44-46)*** continues the same theme from last Sunday's readings, but with a twist. Jesus uses simple examples from daily life to describe the ***Kingdom of Heaven (or the Kingdom of God, which are the same)*** such as buried treasure, a fine pearl (and from other gospel passages), we can add, yeast, seeds and weeds, etc. (all things that grow), are imbedded, hard to find, yet have value and are worthy of our efforts. These are symbols of the faith given to us at baptism, but we must nourish and use our faith, because as Jesus says, ***"At the last judgment, the***

angels will separate those who fulfilled their role from those who did not." Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

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