

Homily

1 Kings 3: 5, 7 -12 and Matthew 13: 44-52

- If you could make one wish and have it come true, what would you wish for?
- Would it be something material? Wealth? A new house? New car? (Advertisers spend millions of dollars trying to convince us we need this or that!)
- Would it be a big time job? Power and influence? Fame? (The devil tempted Jesus with these things in the desert, Remember?)
- Would it be something less selfish – good health for our loved ones for example?
- Our wishes, our dreams reflect what we really want, what we really value, what we think will make us most happy.
- In our first reading today we find King Solomon (already special, a friend of God) is given an amazing opportunity. God tells him: “make a wish”. Ask for anything – and it is yours! (Wow). So what does Solomon ask for?
- Not wealth, not power, not fame – not even good health or a long life. What did Solomon value most? What did he think would make him most happy?
- This is what Solomon asked God for: *“Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.”*
- An understanding heart (a closer translation to the Hebrew text is “a listening heart”) – that knows right from wrong so he could serve others well. Or in other words, Solomon was asking for a closer friendship with God to better know God’s will.
- It is certainly a prayer we should make for our leaders of today – but what a wonderful world it would be if each of us individually made this prayer *for ourselves* – as Solomon did.
- For three Sundays now we have been reading from Chapter 13 of St. Matthews Gospel. And it is important to know that Matthew was writing to a particular audience of his day. They were Jewish Christians. And as Jews they were forbidden to use or say the name of God (out of deep reverence). Out of respect for his audience, Matthew uses the term “Kingdom of Heaven” which for him and his audience was understood to mean “a close friendship with God – both in earthly life and beyond”.

- In this week's Gospel Jesus again speaks of this close friendship with God and how central it is to who we are and what we were created for.
- Today we read the very last paragraphs of Chapter 13 in which Matthew summarizes all the points Jesus makes about the Kingdom of Heaven.
- First and foremost Jesus reminds us the Kingdom of Heaven, this friendship with God, is a thing of great value and joy. Jesus compares it to a treasure and a fine pearl.
- Jesus tells us nothing is more valuable, nothing brings more joy to us than God's love. God made us. He wants only good things for us.
- St. Paul reminds us of this today in our second reading when he writes: "All things work for good, for those who love God".
- We know this don't we? All the good in our lives comes from God. Those we love, family, friends. The talents we have, the strength in troubled times – all from God. All because of His friendship and His love for us.
- Next Jesus tells us the Kingdom of Heaven/God's friendship is open to everyone. This week Jesus uses the example of a net which collects fish of every kind. In last week's Gospel Jesus spoke of a huge bush where all birds could come to live. All to make the point: God's Kingdom has room for everyone and everyone is important.
- Isn't it great to know that? No one is too small, no one is insignificant in God's eyes. Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking we are just ordinary, our daily tasks too routine, our jobs boring and mundane. We might think our lives are insignificant in the "big scheme of things". This can lead us to wish for the wrong things.
- But Jesus reminds us we should never underestimate what God can do and is doing through us.
- To God you are precious, each one of us essential. Just because what we do may not be widely recognized (let's face it caring for a family, visiting a sick friend, volunteering at a soup kitchen rarely makes the nightly news) doesn't mean it is not important. God knows it is!
- Jesus tells us we have a relationship with God, a friendship. It started at our Baptism and everyday since then we have the opportunity to enter into a closer and closer friendship with God.

How? It starts by *wanting to do right*. Seeking what God values (That is what King Solomon wanted).

- And God gave us a clear definition of “What is right”. It is all there in the Ten Commandments: three on the right way to love God and seven on the right way to love each other. These are constant, unchanging truths.
- The struggle is how to apply them to each situation life presents. That is where the need for an understanding, listening heart comes in. That’s where close friendship with God is essential. That’s why King Solomon valued this above all else – and prayed for it.
- Throughout Chapter 13 of Matthew’s Gospel we are also reminded that the choice to accept or reject that close friendship with God is our free choice.
- In our Gospel reading we heard the serious consequences of rejecting the Kingdom of Heaven, rejecting God’s friendship. We were told “weeds would be collected and burnt” and today we hear “bad fish will be thrown away”.
- But here is the really, really good news:
- If we make one wish – not the one for riches or power or fame.
- If we make that one wish, the one Jesus has been urging us to make. The most important wish, the most meaningful one; the wish of Solomon: Lord, give me an understanding heart, to know right from wrong, so I can serve others well. Lord give me a closer friendship with you.
- If we make **that** wish - we can count on it being granted!
- As St. Paul reminds us in today’s second reading, God is there just waiting, so anxiously waiting for us to ask. So anxious to grant this wish, make it a reality for us. Because as St. Paul says: “God predestined us for this friendship” – and so God calls us over and over again.
- All we have to do is ask, make that one wish and God will send the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us. He will give us the Holy Eucharist, Jesus Himself, to dwell in us, giving us that understanding heart.
- Let’s not keep God waiting. Let’s make that wish right now. Let’s do it as a parish family – we may not be physically present with each other but we can unite spiritually. Pray it with me now:
- *“Lord, give me an understanding heart, to know right from wrong, so I can serve others well.”*

- Jesus closes Chapter 13 with a question and a command. He asks His disciples (including you and me): “ Do you understand all these thing?”
- Understand we are offered friendship with God here and now?
- Understand how precious this offer is?
- Understand how close God is to you? Understand the love and help available?
- Then He gives the command: Take what you know and share it. Spread the Kingdom of Heaven – build it up. Help others to make the one right wish.
- It is our responsibility as close friends of God.