

Radically Different is the Gospel

17th Week of Ordinary Time - Matthew 13:44-52

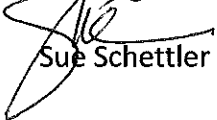
Pope Francis has rejected much of the regalia and extravagant aspect of the papacy for a more simple and pared down approach. He has kissed the heads, hands and feet of some of the most marginalized people in the world. I understand that Pope Francis actually sneaks out of his living quarters at night to go feed the poor. The world has responded to his radically different approach to the papacy with both cheers of approval as well as the suspicion that he is undermining the very fabric of the Church. I think what this man is doing is modeling for the world how radically different is the gospel.

Jesus says that **“the Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all the he has and buys that field.”** Can you imagine selling everything you have in pursuit of the reign of God? I haven't reached that level of Christian maturity yet. But I have had a foretaste. I have experienced the brutal nature of living life, and still I find joy in getting up every day because I know of God's love for me. I have known times when God seems very distant to me and other times when I am filled with some sense of the Divine living in every cell of my being. I have been in search of this “treasure” for all of my life. The interesting point that Jesus is making today is that God is the one in pursuit. God is the one that continues the ever-present Divine search for me... and for you. The treasure of eternal life is there in our everyday experience. The gift of faith is something we can almost trip over if we just pay attention. The problem is that sometimes we fail to recognize the Kingdom in our midst. We sometimes fail to respond to God with our lives.

Jesus says in the gospel today that, **“the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.”** The challenge for me then is to get up each day to search for God, to discover God in the ordinary, boring, sometimes difficult places of my life. And then, celebrate that discovery every day, recommitting myself to that great gift of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. This includes those days when I'm not too sure of what I believe. I admit that there are days I struggle to keep my heart and my head in the Kingdom. There are lots of other things vying for my attention.

Jesus addresses this very thing when He names the radical reality that good and evil live together. And that the radical nature of God's reign **“is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind.”** God's reach is never beyond the human condition of sin. God's mercy, His radical love, extends beyond our limitations. God is always there to offer every single person the chance to start over, to begin again. This, I believe, is what our dear Pope Francis is attempting to demonstrate to the world. Radically different is the gospel as God comes to us in ways we can't even imagine. The Kingdom of Heaven is meant for every single person, the good and the not so good. That includes you and me. Rejoice.... and share this joy and treasure with someone else this week.

Blessings!


Sue Schettler