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Today's Word

The Seventeenth Sunday, Year A (26 July)

Parish Priest: Father Hiroshi Konishi

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5, 7 - 12

Second Reading: Letter to the Romans 8:28 - 30

Gospel Reading: Gospel of Matthew 13:44 - 52

From the Three Readings

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Second Reading: Letter to the Romans 8:28 - 30

Gospel Reading: Gospel of Matthew 13:44 - 52

From the three readings

In the First Reading, the Lord God says to Solomon, "Ask for whatever you wish." We may ask God for anything we wish. Solomon's response consists of gratitude for past events (verse 6), his current challenges (verses 7 - 8), an acknowledgment of his needs (verse 9), and hope for the future (verse 9). He then prays, "Grant me a discerning heart." What Solomon desired above all else was God's wisdom.

In the Second Reading, it says that God "works together with those he has called so that all things may work for good." In this way, God cares for us through the events of daily life. This is because, as it says, "we are those who have been called according to his plan," we have been chosen in advance by God's love and called to be made righteous.

In the Gospel reading, three parables are read, and all of them were everyday occurrences for the disciples (the field, the merchant seeking goods, and the net full of fish). The same is true of the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, which were in last week's Gospel reading. God, who calls out to us, "Ask for whatever you wish," is at work in the events of our daily lives. Those who recognize God's care in such everyday moments truly find the beginning of the "Kingdom of Heaven" there. Such people can become disciples of the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, scholars. However, to do so, they need a "discerning heart," just as Solomon asked for—that is, wisdom from God.

Let us consider the Gospel reading. In Chapter 13 of the Gospel according to Matthew, seven parables are told. Today, we will focus on the last three of these and a summary of the entire chapter. Here, it is the disciples who are listening to the parables spoken by Jesus. And the disciples are none other than those who have heard and understood Jesus' words.

The “wicked” mentioned in verse 49 refer to those who are so insensitive that they fail to recognize the precious “Kingdom of Heaven”—something they would be willing to sell all their possessions to obtain. The “treasure in a field” and the “precious pearl” are things that can be found even in our daily lives. And once found, we simply cannot help but acquire them at any cost. God’s work is likewise found in everyday life. That is what the “Kingdom of Heaven” is all about. However, those who fail to recognize the nature and manifestations of such a “Kingdom of Heaven” are called “the wicked” here.

The term “separate” in verse 49 is “aphorizo” in Greek. It means to separate or set apart. Elsewhere, it is written as follows:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will take his seat on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:31–32).

These words likely refer to the final judgment at the end of the age.

Please note the phrase “like the master of the house” in verse 52. The master brings out both new and old things from his “storehouse.” We can safely assume that the “master” here alludes to Jesus. The “old things” refer to Jewish traditions and the teachings of the Old Testament. On the other hand, the “new things” refer to the teachings of Jesus.

The term “scholar” in this verse is “grammateus” in Greek. This word is derived from “to write” (grapheo). In most cases, it is used to mean “scribes.” Scribes look up to their teachers as “masters” and serve the written Law. However, “scholars who have learned about the Kingdom of Heaven” are those who have become disciples of the Kingdom of Heaven; they learn from the Kingdom of Heaven and serve the Kingdom of Heaven.