

## **17<sup>th</sup> Sunday A Cycle homily 7-26-17**

**Today we continue the third sermon found in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus instructs his disciples with parables. As we have seen in the last two weeks, parables are about US. We are called to reflect the Kingdom of God which is in our midst.**

**Let us focus on the three parables for today: The parable of the treasure in a field is my favorite. A man discovers a treasure in a field. He is so overwhelmed with the discovery that he sells all that he has to buy the field. The disciples of Jesus have found so valuable a gift in Jesus that they are willing to give up EVERYTHING to follow him.**

**The parable of the treasure in the field reminds me of the experience of a man I met this past week. His name is Michael Stubbs. He was in his 70's, born in California and was rather poor. He got married, lived with his new wife in a trailer park and began building houses.**

**Eventually he got rich building 1 million dollar homes on the west coast. Then he lost everything in 2008 with the crash of the housing market.**

He decided to come to Detroit with a partner and invest in houses with the thought of getting rich. The venture did not go well and his partner pulled out but Michael continued.

Michael Stubbs is a deeply religious man, a Mormon, who believes deeply in Jesus Christ. He was looking for that treasure in the field. He thought at first that his “treasure” was to make big money quickly. His thinking was much like people who want to hit the lottery or people who go get rich at the casino. I can’t tell you how many people have come up to me and said, “ Hey Father, when I hit the lotto you are going to get 10%!” Well, I am still waiting.

Like most of us, Michael thought riches would make him happy. It never does: most people who happen to strike it rich end up very unhappy. They do not know who their real friends are any more. They lose their way. What really makes us happy are friends and faith, not riches.

Michael lives in a house on Pembroke in our neighborhood and was driving down the street one afternoon. He looked over and saw an elderly African American woman tending her beautiful flower garden in front of her house. She was just planting flowers and singing Negro Spirituals. It was obvious that she had placed her trust in the Kingdom

of God. He looked around and saw that the houses around her home also had planted flowers and that her spirit had also touched others in the neighborhood. She had found her treasure.

All of a sudden Michael discovered where his treasure was. He was going to use his builder's license, buy a number of houses which were scheduled for demolition in the neighborhood, hire young men in the community and teach them handyman skills on how to repair the houses. He figured it would take about \$15,000 to get a house ready to rent. Then he would find a struggling family and rent the house to them for \$500 a month. After four years, if the family kept up the payments, they could buy the house a mere \$500.

Michael had found out what was the treasure of today's gospel; it was the Kingdom of God. Remember the first words of the parable: "The Kingdom of God is like a man who finds a great treasure.

We know that the kingdom of God is not money. No. The kingdom is a kingdom of justice, of love and peace. By refurbishing homes, he could help establish a neighborhood which would put young people to work and allow those struggling economically to rent a house, and eventually buy one very reasonably.

**Yes, as Jesus says in today's gospel, the Kingdom of God IS our treasure.**

**The parables point out that there are many ways we come to experience the Kingdom of God: Sometimes it just dawns on us all of a sudden as it did for Michael Stubbs when he believes God challenged him to help build up his kingdom in the housing field.**

**But as the parables say, sometimes his kingdom of God takes hold of us in other ways. Sometimes it comes upon us like it did to the man searching for pearl of great price who diligently searched for that pearl until he found it. The merchant goes searching, much like an engineer would.**

**Many of us know the story of Dorothy Day. She grew up in the 1920's in New York. She diligently searched for the Kingdom of God in many ways: through loving relationships, through rejecting God and becoming an atheist until she found the pearl of God's love and spent the rest her life sharing her treasure with others, especially the poor. She is now up for sainthood in the Church.**

**For many of us we have discovered the Kingdom of God in a much less dramatic way. We enter the net of God's love at a young age in the waters of baptism and the loving examples of our family and faith families. We slowly but surely come to experience that the Kingdom of God is already within us. We only need to claim it.**

**Yes, Jesus taught them in parables to help them discover that the Kingdom of God is at hand.**

**Brothers and sisters,**

- **search for that treasure,**
- **nurture the life of the kingdom within you,**
- **and then share with others the Good news Jesus came to bring us...**

**For, indeed, it is only the kingdom of God revealed by Jesus Christ which alone can bring joy, justice and peace to your hearts.**