

Every week *The Pueblo Chieftain* sends a reporter on the street to ask random people “The Question of the Week.” If the question were asked, “If you could have anything you want, what would it be?” – I’ll bet the majority of answers would be something like “I want to win the lottery” or “I want spend my life with the most beautiful woman in the world (or the handsomest man in the world).” Those typical responses are why God is so surprised in our First Reading, when Solomon shows he cares more about his people than himself, and he asks for wisdom to govern them with justice and fairness.

Now if I asked you that same question, I hope your answer would be: “I want to go to Heaven, I want to enjoy eternal life with Jesus Christ.” There’s a big discrepancy here! Those 2 different answers show we disconnect our daily lives from our faith lives. That *Pueblo Chieftain* reporter should get the same answer that I get (it would be nice to read in the newspaper that living in God’s Kingdom has value!). We need to bring our faith life into our daily life, to link them, because living in God’s Kingdom really is the most important goal for each one of us. If we don’t make it, we’ll be kicking ourselves for eternity.

That’s what Jesus is getting at in today’s Gospel. He uses a couple examples of people who strive for lesser things to show we need their same attitude to reach our goal, what matters most to us: eternal life in God’s Kingdom. For the characters in his two parables, it takes work, sacrifices and commitment to be able to buy the hidden treasure in the field, the pearl of great price.

In our heads we say: oh yes, yes, yes, I will do whatever it takes to live in God’s Kingdom. But then it doesn’t take long before we’re presented with distractions, enticing temptations to sin, and attitudes that weaken our commitment to our goal. We may start resenting what it takes to reach our goal; our sacrifices to get there may leave us bitter, we might start feeling we’re missing out on life, or that we’re depriving ourselves. And then we start envying people who are having a good ole’ time being selfish. Watch out! This spells trouble.

Think back to the Gospel. The guy who sells everything he owns so that he can buy the field with the buried treasure, and the merchant who does the same to buy the pearl of his dreams – they’re so excited and joyful about what they discovered that neither character regrets for a second what they had to give up to get them. Like them, we can’t focus on what we give up or lose to get into the Kingdom; let’s focus instead on our joy when we discovered it in the Good News of Jesus Christ, and what awaits us when we get there. Or else we won’t arrive!

For Jesus, a joyful life with God surpasses anything we can imagine, and if people are willing to make sacrifices for so much less, like buried treasure and a priceless pearl, we can surely empty ourselves so we can share in God’s life forever. He says prefer God’s Kingdom above everything else, cling to it, do whatever we have to do for it.

If no sacrifice is too great for getting to live in God’s Kingdom, we have to ask ourselves what we have to change. What distracts me from God’s kingdom? What do I need to let go of? What attractive sins do I have to avoid? What causes me to throw self-pity parties for myself? Cast aside whatever gets in the way of God’s Kingdom, because that’s what we really want.

It’s not easy to follow Christ’s example and live for others, to put others first instead of ourselves; but Jesus gives us His grace to do it. And the Communion of Saints are praying for us, that we’ll reach our goal and join them in Heaven.

Our parish family is also here to support us, to pray for us, to cheer us on, so that God’s Kingdom will stay our heart’s desire, our deepest longing. Let’s help each other us focus on the joy that will be ours after our self-sacrifices: the treasure of God’s kingdom, that pearl of great price.

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