

Reflecting
on the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

Let us begin our time of prayer for the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



Blessed are they who follow God's law
and walk in his way: the kingdom is theirs.



Spend some time just looking at the three images.

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.



Lord, how I love your law!

My part, I have resolved, O Lord,
is to obey your word.
The law from your mouth means more to me
than silver and gold.

Lord, how I love your law!

Let your love be ready to console me
by your promise to your servant.
Let your love come to me and I shall live
for your law is my delight.

Lord, how I love your law!

That is why I love your commands
more than finest gold,
That is why I rule my life by your precepts,
I hate false ways.

Lord, how I love your law!

Your will is wonderful indeed;
therefore I obey it.
The unfolding of your word gives light
and teaches the simple.

Lord, how I love your law!

**Now, either read slowly to yourself this story
from the Gospel according to Matthew or better
still, read it aloud, again slowly.**

From the Gospel according to Matthew 13:33-46



Jesus said 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.'



'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.'

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word/phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.

The reflection on the Gospel is provided by Eamonn Murphy, a parishioner in St Bartholomew's Parish, Rainhill.



As a teenager I recall thinking that by the time I would be 25 or 30 years, I would have life 'sorted'. I would have found whatever it was I was searching for... And then in my thirties I remember thinking that if only I could... if only I could rid myself of fear and self-doubt, I would get my life sorted. Today, I have come to terms with the fact that I will never have myself sorted. There is consolation in U2's song, 'I still haven't found what I'm looking for.' The lyrics express this relentless quest:

'Yes I have climbed the highest mountains.
I have run through the fields.
I have crawled.
I've scaled city walls.'

This search is expressed in the first reading today when Solomon asks God to give him a heart to understand; and then the psalmist cries out, 'Let your love come to me and I shall live.'

Jesus seems to understand the searching that is part of life and also that we might have a hard time believing that God is at the heart of our search. With no easy answers Jesus reaches out to us as he reached out to the Samaritan woman, the rich young man and so many others..... to invite, accept, cajole, encourage us to seek that which will bring us to another place as we follow the quest that will culminate in the fullness of life.

Jesus' conviction that life is more than what we can physically see entices us by telling us that it is like a treasure hunt. We will not be disappointed! We will discover that our lives have been touched by the joy, the wonder, the surprise of the God who, as today's second reading says, 'turns everything to our good'.

During recent times we have all had to deal with many harsh realities. We have had to dig deep within ourselves; to learn to read the signs of the times; to discover what is important in our lives – our real treasure. We have been called to pay attention to our inner life, to listen, to let go of some things.

Letting go seems to have been a feature of this unusual time of pandemic. It is not something we are comfortable with or indeed encouraged to strive for in our culture. Quite the opposite! But maybe we are learning how to lose in order to win authenticity, to seek God 'with a sincere heart' not outside ourselves but within. As St Augustine wrote 'Don't scatter yourself around. Look to your intimate being. Truth resides in the inner person.'

Bono continued his song:

'I believe in the kingdom come.
Then all the colours bleed into one.
Bleed into one.
But yes still I'm running.'

As we return to the 'new normal', let us never give up this wonderful, intriguing, sometimes bewildering search. Life will never be sorted but that's ok.

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem by R. S. Thomas.



The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.

Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

We pray for Pope Francis as he continues to name the
injustice in our world and the inequalities of our times
... may he be strengthened by the power of God's
grace at work within him.

We pray for families as they seek the rest and
relaxation which traditionally comes with a summer
holiday ... may they experience joy and laughter and
draw closer to one another in whatever place they find
themselves.

We pray for all who are diagnosed with a terminal
illness, all those who are beginning challenging
treatments and all who will care for them ... may they
know the presence of God in the everyday
circumstances of their lives.

We pray for all who are close to death and those who
have recently died... may they know the deep peace of
the Risen Lord.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection, listen to *Rejoice and be glad.*



Blessed the gentle in spirit
They shall inherit the earth
Blessed the ones who are mourning;
God will comfort you.

*Rejoice and be glad, all you people;
You shall have reward!
Yours is the Kingdom of Heaven
And you shall be children of God!*

Blessed the ones who are thirsty
And hungry for all that is right.
Blessed the ones who show mercy,
They will be satisfied.

*Rejoice and be glad, all you people;
You shall have reward!
Yours is the Kingdom of Heaven
And you shall be children of God!*

Blessed the pure in heart
For they shall see their God.
Blessed the ones who are peaceful
And suffer for righteousness.

*Rejoice and be glad, all you people;
You shall have reward!
Yours is the Kingdom of Heaven
And you shall be children of God!*

Acknowledgements

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