

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

'Have you understood all this?' They said, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Well, then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.'

### The Gospel of the Lord.

### Reflection

by Dianne Bergant CSA

**T**wo themes seem to weave through the readings for this Sunday: treasure and delight. The treasure is the extraordinary gift that comes from God; the delight is the joy that we experience when we realise that the treasure is ours. A third theme, which is found in the first reading, picks up a theme that we have considered several times during this period of Ordinary Time, namely, service of others.

The treasure is the kingdom of heaven. It is the prize that gives meaning to the present, and its fullest delight draws us into the future. The reign of God is the fulfilment of our deepest desires and our fondest hopes. Nothing in the world can compare with it, and that is why we are willing to sacrifice everything to attain it. The treasure that we find is really a gift that is given. We need not work to attain the kingdom, nor can we earn it in any way. It is given to us by God. All we have to do is accept it.

Solomon chose to be of service to others. In this he is a model for disciples to follow. We have discovered the treasure in the field; we have found the pearl of great price. What we have been given, we must now give to others. In giving we will lose nothing. In fact, we gain an abundance

of blessings. All things work for good, and God is glorified in all. Such is the character of the kingdom of God.

### Biblical Overview

by Greg Sunter

**F**or some people wisdom is a charism. They are born with it. For the rest of us, wisdom can be an accrued commodity based on mistakes, solutions and just plain luck. No matter how one gains it, wisdom is invaluable. Today's readings are loaded with examples of wisdom-directed lives.

The first parable is an example of 'just plain luck'. The second one completes a search when the merchant finally finds the perfect pearl. Both demonstrate wisdom that directed prompt actions to seize the treasure with little deliberation. Wisdom is essential in the discovery and the action to grab the prize. It might not be there tomorrow.

The third parable lends a different spin to the kingdom metaphor. It is the familiar image of the dragnet and what composes its contents. Some fish are kept. Some are rejected. Jesus extends this image to what will happen when the final judgment occurs and the angels take the rejects to their fiery and noisy punishment.

So far, no manuscript has been discovered that lists the criteria for what makes the good fish good and the bad fish bad. Alas, every metaphor does have its own limitations.

That notwithstanding, the necessary element in all of these judgments is wisdom. It would seem that wisdom is a pure gift. The first reading from Kings shows how Solomon demonstrated his wisdom by asking God for wisdom. 'Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.' Because of his self-effacing request, the Lord God said, 'I do as you requested.' Solomon had divine intervention. For the rest of us, we will have to continue making mistakes and working out solutions and relying on just plain luck.



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# Our Sunday Word

St Michael's Parish, Nowra

nowraparish.org.au

17th Sunday (Year A) ~ in the season of the year

27 July 2008

## Bible Sunday

### First Reading

3:5,7-12

#### *A reading from the first book of Kings*

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, 'Ask what you would like me to give you.' Solomon replied, 'Lord, my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of this people of yours that you have chosen, a people so many its numbers cannot be counted or reckoned. Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great?' It pleased the Lord that Solomon should have asked for this. 'Since you have asked for this' the Lord said 'and not asked for long life for yourself or riches or the lives of your enemies, but have asked for a discerning judgement for yourself, here and now I do what you ask. I give you a heart wise and shrewd as none before you has had and none will have after you.'

### The word of the Lord.

### Responsorial Psalm

Ps 118

**R/** Lord, I love your commands.

1. 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. (R.)
2. 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. (R.)
3. 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. (R.)
4. Your will is wonderful indeed; therefore I obey it. The unfolding of your word gives light and teaches the simple. (R.)



### Second Reading

8:28-30

#### *A reading from St Paul to the Romans*

We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son, so that his Son might be the eldest of many brothers. He called those he intended for this; those he called he justified, and with those he justified he shared his glory.

### The word of the Lord.

### Gospel Acclamation Mt 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia! Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom. Alleluia!

### Gospel

13:44-52

#### *The holy Gospel according to Matthew*

Jesus said to the crowds, 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.'