

Rev. Emmanuel-Garet Ifeakor
1 Kings 3:5, 7-12
Romans 8:28-30
Matthew 13:44-52

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Epiphany Catholic Church
Louisville, KY, USA
July 26, 2026

Theme: Treasure beyond treasure.

(Singing) “My soul is thirsting for your peace, near to you my Lord.” Treasure beyond treasure. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, every one of us always has what we call goals, dreams, targets, and aspirations. Whenever we set a goal or whenever we have goals, dreams, aspirations and targets, the next stage is: what am I going to do in order to meet my goal? What am I going to do in order to realize my dreams? What am I going to do in order to achieve my dreams? And whenever we do that, we commit ourselves in those things. Therefore, people rise early in the morning to go to work just to have financial stability. People take extra shifts at night in order to meet their financial stability or to pay their bills. These are goals, and they want to realize them. In this sense, the biblical Queen of Sheba had to travel from the East to go and meet Solomon in order to experience the wisdom of Solomon, Cf I Kings 10. The three magi in the gospel traveled from the East in order to go many miles to go and see the newborn king, Cf. Matthew 2. All of these could be called what people dearly hold at heart, treasure. Treasure could be defined as a large amount of money, riches or valuable objects or loved ones. Treasure could also be gold or jewels or what someone cherishes highly.

However, I want to talk about today the treasure beyond treasure; the greatest treasure. And that is the kingdom of heaven. In the gospel, Jesus continues to teach us through parables, that is, using the things we see every day to convey an eternal truth. He says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” This man was deliberately searching for the treasure. He found it. He hid it again, went and sold everything he had out of joy in order to buy the field. And he preserved the field. My dear friends in Christ, today we're going to ask ourselves - you ask yourself, I'm going to ask myself - what do I treasure most? That thing you treasure most is not what I'm talking about today. I am talking about the treasure beyond what you treasure. Paul says, “But, as it is written, ‘What no

eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.” Cf. I Cor. 2:9. It is not your clothes. It is not your cars. It is not your work or your occupation or your profession or your career. All these are earthly treasures. And they're going to pass away. But when we pursue our earthly treasure, do we have time for the heavenly treasure? The man found a treasure, sold what he had in order to get what he wanted. Recall that many people in the history of this church, the people that are called martyrs died for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. They had to put their own blood because of this great treasure, the treasure beyond treasure, the greatest treasure. We're going to ask ourselves, what are we doing to preserve this heavenly treasure? When you are looking for any earthly treasure or worldly treasure, you might do it anyhow. You might not even follow the rules just to get money: get rich quick syndrome. The same way, just to get a degree, you might not even do things rightly. But in the treasure beyond treasure, you're going to do things rightly. That is why in the first reading, when God told Solomon, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you,” Solomon asked for a heart to distinguish between good and evil. “Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.” God said to Solomon, I am happy you didn't ask about *for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies, but for understanding so that you may know what is right*. His request was granted. This reminded me of the word of God in Matthew 6:33, “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

The second reading begins by saying, “Brothers and sisters: We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Thus, even your earthly treasures when you manage them well, will lead you to the treasure beyond treasure. Toward the end of the gospel reading, the word of God says, “Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.” This is how the angels will come on the last day to separate the righteous and the wicked. Since last three Sundays, Jesus has been teaching us how to align ourselves to the treasure beyond treasure. Jesus doesn't want any of us not to enter that treasure beyond treasure. And that is why in the last Sunday gospel reading, he talks about a deliberate act of grace that had been given to you and me in order to align myself along the treasure beyond treasure. This treasure beyond treasure is where we are going to experience God and see him face to face. What we have done here, as I said before, is going to determine whether we are going to be righteous, or are we are going to be the wicked. But at the end, everything is left in the hands of God to determine. However, you have to make your own effort to be acclaimed as righteous, and I

have to make my own effort. This is the effort the man made in the gospel to deliberately search for a lasting treasure. He went and sold everything in order to buy it. Then, how do I preserve the baptismal treasure given to me on the day of baptism? You know, the question of people being good or not being good depends on choice. And what I pray for in my life is that I will make every effort to continue to do good, to align myself to the kingdom of heaven and not to drop the good things. You have to ask yourself, how far have I preserved this kingdom of heaven given to me in baptism and in the reception of the holy communion? Am I dropping good things and taking bad things? If I'm dropping good things and taking bad things, the gospel says, at the end of time, God is going to separate the wicked from the good.

Our prayer is that God will give us the strength, grace, wisdom and understanding, like Solomon in the first reading, to distinguish right from wrong. You know, today, it seems like there is no longer standard again. But God is the standard. Everybody wants to do what he wants to do. This is called moral relativism. I want to do what I want to do. I want to do what satisfies me. But God is the standard. Everything is going to be left for God to decide. But you have to make your own effort, and I have to make my own effort, in order to preserve and reach the treasure beyond treasure. (Singing) "My soul is longing for your peace, near to you, my God." Treasure beyond treasure.