

## Picture the Kingdom of God

July 26, 2020, Seventeenth Sunday In Ordinary Time – Gospel of Matthew 13:44-52  
Fr. Brad

I had some time to commune with nature this past week and in particular, do a little fishing and enjoy the peace and quiet of some reflective reading with birds singing in the background. Sure beats the sound of traffic.

One morning during prayer time out on the balcony deck, I happened to notice a little yellow bird, a baby perhaps, parked just a few feet from me. It seemed to be sleeping. I got up for a closer look, fully expecting it to fly off....but it stayed put. It's eyes were closed until I brushed its back with my finger and then it opened its eyes. Still, it did not move. There was no sign of injury. I sat back down and looked up once



in awhile as it gradually, over the next several minutes, decided it was getting to be time to leave. I was taken by the fact that it seemed unafraid and did not seem to mind my presence even when I approached and petted it. Imagine if the whole world could live in such trust and peaceful coexistence without feeling threatened.

Picture what the kingdom of God really means and what it is like. It is not merely about living in the lap of luxury or having the most physically comfortable life, it's not about sleeping on clouds all day and picking up your harp once in a while to play a tune.

It's about discovery. It's about obtaining a hint of an answer to the deepest longings of our hearts .... a longing that we have never been able to put into words.....a feeling of...belonging perhaps? of finally discovering who we truly are, a feeling of the safety, and of being at home....and how we are intimately connected with all creation.

It is the addressing of a longing that goes far beyond the cheap facsimile the world offers as a substitute for what our God is offering.

And when that longing is answered, we realize that everything else pales in comparison. Nothing else matters to the same degree even if it doesn't eliminate all the pain and struggle and turmoil of this world. Somehow we find that the challenging things of life in this world don't threaten us, because there is nothing to be afraid anymore. We can be broadsided by the worst catastrophes the world can offer and remain unshaken because the kingdom of God is in our hearts.

I think of Martin Luther King's final speech before his assassination whereby he states that he no longer fears any man, that he has seen the promised land. The conviction in his voice expressed his coming to himself and the truth.

It is THAT part of us that needs to be discovered if it has not been already - - that part of us that allows us to then not live in fear or that we have to be politically correct or that we have to be someone we are not.

It also means that we can forgive when we have been hurt or threatened. It also awakens that part of us that knows that vengeance on our enemies is not the answer we are looking for that will satisfy.

In our first reading, Solomon had his priorities straight when he ponders what God is offering him.

The Lord, in a dream, asked Solomon, ' Ask what I should give you.'

Solomon's request, after much pondering is a noble one. As heir to King David he was aware of the daunting role he was inheriting. And he asked for help - - help from above, the help from God as his father did.

And the Lord's response is, 'Because you have not asked for long life or riches for yourself or vengeance on your enemies I will give you what you ask for.'

Too often in this world, history has shown that positions of powers such as was given to Solomon end up become venues for self-interest and abuse of power.

Yet in our reading today, Solomon asked for the gift of an understanding mind, and for the ability to discern between good and evil. And this was granted him.

Saint Paul, in his letter to the Romans, reminds us that just as sure as the Father sent the Son into the world to lead humanity forward, the Son will be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters who have been called to follow in his footsteps and continue the mission of redemption and salvation inaugurated by Jesus.

Yet to be adopted sons and daughters in Christ to carry on his work requires us hand over ourselves to his purposes over and beyond our own.

Saint Paul says more than once in his letters that as Christians, in our baptism our lives are hidden in Christ. What motivates us is the kingdom of God and discovering that awaits us if we but persevere.

The images that Jesus uses in the gospel allude to the notion that the kingdom of God to which Jesus speaks **is upon us** but that fulfilment and the time of its unfolding is not of our choosing.

What we have now in this valley of tears is a promise of the grace of the spiritual gifts including the sacraments that God gives us in order to persevere in a world that too often pulls things apart rather than brings them together. May we learn to navigate through the brokenness of this world and name and celebrate what is truly of the Kingdom of God - - already here but not yet.