

**HE SELLS ALL THAT HE HAS AND BYES THE FIELD – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi
OSM**

Mt 13.44-52

At that time Jesus said to his disciples, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. 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, who, on finding one pearl of great value, 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 gathered fish of every kind.

When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes."

And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Jesus never speaks of sacrifices for the kingdom, but rather of joy. The word 'sacrifices' in Matthew's Gospel appears only twice and then only to deny them. Jesus, referring to the expression of the prophet Hosea, repeats that the Lord does not ask sacrifices for himself, but for mercy, that is the same attitude of love aimed towards mankind.

So, Jesus never talks or asks for sacrifices for the kingdom, in fact He speaks continually of joy. The word 'joy' in Matthew's Gospel appears six times. And here it is found at the end of the seventh parable that refers to the kingdom, at chapter 13, 44-52 of Matthew's Gospel.

The evangelist writes: "*«The kingdom of heaven..»*", remember that the kingdom of heaven is a typical expression of Matthew's that means the kingdom of God, therefore it is not a kingdom in the hereafter, but a kingdom here, now, an alternative to the society ,that Jesus presents. Well then, Jesus presents this alternative as "*«... like treasure..»*", the word 'treasure' opens and closes the passage of the liturgy today, "*«..hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy...»*" literally ' for the joy'.

It is the motivation. It was found in Jesus' message, in the alternative society, the answer to the desire to the real fullness of life. "*«...sells all that he has and buys that field»*". Therefore it is not the fruit for who knows what pains or renunciations, but it is for joy. It does not consist in leaving something, but in finding all. And here there is no talk of external compensation, but of a interior fullness.

So the picture of the kingdom that Jesus presents is that of finding in the alternative society and in His message, the answer to the desire of the fullness of life that every man carries inside himself. This is the source of joy. There is a risk, and it is seen in the Gospels, and it is that leaving without finding, so then one searches to recuperate that which has been lost.

As when Peter says: "*So, we have left everything and followed you, what will we have in return?*" But who leaves and finds this treasure, because he finds this treasure, he has a uncontrollable joy, a joy that is the characteristic of a believer. The same as the second parable. "*...whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish..*" (Philippians 3,7-9)

Therefore Jesus invites to see in His message the fullness of life to which each man aims for. And when one finds this fullness of life all the rest loses value. The third parable is different and speaks of the result of this choice. "*«Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. »*", the evangelist did not write 'of fish' it is an addition of the translator, Why not write 'of fish' even if it is about that? Because it refers to the mission of the disciples to be fishers of men. Jesus calls for them to fish for men.

To fish a fish means to take it out of its own natural habitat of water where it has life to give it death; to fish a man means to pull out of that which gives death to give him life. "*« When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away ... »*" Here the evangelist did not use the word 'bad' in the original text, because it could indicate a judgment, with a moral significance.

The evangelist uses the word "rotten". Fishermen do not give moral judgment to their fish, the good and the bad, but those full of life are found, and those that are already dead in an advanced state of decay, It is the same expression that Jesus had used for the tree, the rotten tree that can only produce bad fruit. Therefore it is not a judgment of Jesus, but an assumption.

Between who has the fullness of life and who is in fact in putrefaction of death. The welcoming of Jesus' message conducts mankind to such a fullness of life that it is definite; to refuse this message, living only for self, brings a definite death, to the putrefaction of one's own existence.

And the evangelist continues: "*«So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil...»*", but literally the word is evil, those that behave as their father, the evil one, the devil. "*« from the righteous»*", literally the just "*«and throw them into the fiery furnace»*". The phrase 'fiery furnace' the evangelist takes from the Book of Daniel chapter 3, 6, in which it represents the punishment for those who did not worship the statue of Nebuchadnezzar.

That which was the punishment for who did not worship the power became the end of who had worshiped the power. Who orientates his own life for the good of others, raised himself. Who thinks only of himself, who thinks of his own power, in reality destroys himself.

Let's see the end. The evangelist writes: "*«...there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. »*". It is a biblical image that means the realization of the failure of one's own existence. Jesus will already say "what does it serve to possess the whole world and then lose oneself!"

And Jesus asks His disciples: "*«Have you understood all these things? »*" They will reply, "*«Yes. »*"

Here is the conclusion with which the evangelist was probably in agreement. "*And he said to them, «Therefore every scribe... »*", the 'scribe' is a great theologian, when he spoke it was God himself that spoke, he was very important and of great prestige in the world of Israel.

«...has been trained...»". Jesus is rather ironic. The scribe, he that teaches, presented with Jesus' novelty, must return to study, become a disciple. "*«...for the kingdom is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure...»*" - here is the phrase that begins with treasure and ends with treasure - "*«... what is new and what is old. »*".

This dynamic is important, first the new things. Jesus' message has precedence over that of Moses' - And that of Moses is received only in the measure in which it is consistent to his teaching.