

**HE GOES AND SELLS ALL THAT HE HAS AND BUYS THAT FIELD – Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Matthew 13, 44-52**

***“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 end 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.”***

In Matthew’s gospel, chapter 13, Jesus with three parables warns the community of three risks, the three temptations: with the parable of the sower he warned them of the temptation of being a community of elite; the parable of the mustard seed warns of the temptation of greatness and the last, the parable of the leaven( yeast) is of discouragement Now as an antidote to these three temptations, Jesus asks for fidelity to the first beatitude and again uses parables.

Let’s read chapter 13 ,44 of Matthew’s gospel: *“The kingdom of heaven....”* Remember the Kingdom of Heaven is the Kingdom of God, the alternative society that Jesus has come to realise on earth. *“...is like treasure... “*The word treasure opens and closes this phrase, therefore it is a sign of beauty and splendour. *“... hidden in a field, which a man found...”* this man did not search for the treasure, he found it, so it was an opportunity that he was able to seize in his life and, without hesitation, the evangelist writes *“..and covered up. Then in his joy ...”* for having found this treasure, *“..he goes and sells all that he has...”* He does not rethink *“..and buys that field.”*

St. Paul in the Letters to the Philippians, writes *“ But 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.”* (Philippians 3, 7 ) When you encounter Jesus and his message, this is the answer to that desire for fullness of life, that each person carries inside, and everything else loses value.

Jesus continues, *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,..”* the first man found it by chance, and seized the occasion, the opportunity of his life, the second is someone that searches for this occasion. *“....on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”* What the evangelist means is that following Jesus is not at the cost of sacrifices, the term sacrifices appears only twice and in a negative way in this gospel, but for joy, the term joy appears in the gospel of Matthew for good six times.

But Jesus continues: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea..”* Jesus had asked his disciples to be fishers of men and now explains how to fish. *“.. and gathered fish of every kind.”* Gods’ offer is the offer of his love, and it is for all humanity and it is for mankind to respond or not. *“ When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away...”* and here unfortunately the translation is *“...the bad.”* that indicates a moral judgment on the behalf of the

fishermen. That is not the case, the term used by the evangelist is rotten, it is not a judgment, good and bad, is a statement: those that can bring life and those who are instead rotten, so it is not a moral judgment, but a statement. Those who choose life are full of life, those who chose death, are full of death, so they are useless.

In fact Jesus continues: *"So it will be at the end.. "* not of the world, but *"...of the age."* *"The angels will come out and separate the evil.."* it is like the sower with the weeds, they are the children of the devil *"..from the righteous.."* not the good, but righteous meaning faithful, faithful to Jesus' message. *"..and throw them into the fiery furnace."* This is a quote from the Prophet Daniel *"And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."* (ch.3, v.6) It was the penalty for not worshipping the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. But what is Jesus' meaning for the *"fiery furnace."*? Complete destruction – it is the end of those who love power. So those that choose love, sharing, generosity and forgiveness, this is the Kingdom of God that Jesus has come to begin, are full of life and they communicate it, but those that choose egoism, greed and power, are full of death. So there is no judgment on God's behalf, but simply a statement between who is full of life and who is already rotting to death. *"...there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* A biblical image indicating the failure in life.

At the end of these seven parables of the Kingdom, Jesus says *"Have you understood all these things?"* they answer *"Yes. And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe..."* the scribes were important, they were masters of excellence in Israel, they represented the infallible teachings. *"..who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure..."* here is the word treasure that opened the verses and now closes them. *"..what is new ..."* meaning better, the evangelist uses the same words as in John's gospel that will indicate the new commandment, a better commandment, *"..and what is old."* What does the evangelist mean? That the message of Jesus always prevails over that of Moses: the new covenant comes first, before the last covenant of the Old Testament.