

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 25-26, 2020, Cycle A

Our scripture this weekend would have us reflect on what true wisdom is all about – especially our Old Testament reading from First Kings, and our Gospel passage from Matthew. King Solomon prays for the gift of wisdom: “Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong.” God is so pleased with Solomon’s request that He answers: “Because you have asked for this - ...I do as you requested. I give you a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no one to equal you.”

Jesus too teaches us that we should pursue true wisdom in his three short parables about the Kingdom of God: the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and the fishing net. Especially the parables of the “hidden treasure” and “the pearl of great price” teach us that true wisdom is in recognizing that the value of God’s Kingdom is way beyond anything of this world we possess, and to realize that our true heart’s desire is for God’s Kingdom.

Yes, true wisdom lies in desiring what God desires – God’s Kingdom – the ways of truth, love, peace, and justice. Paying attention to God’s desire, planted deep within our hearts – we discover what our true desire is. Recognizing what we truly desire is wisdom.

On July 31st we celebrate the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. St. Ignatius was a champion of discovering the true desire of our own heart. Ignatius believed that we sin, not because we follow our desire, but because we allow petty or superficial wants or cravings to entice us away from the one great desire that God has planted deep in every one of us.

Those of you who are familiar with the story of King Solomon know that he eventually squandered the great gift of wisdom God granted him. Solomon failed precisely because he lost touch with what he truly desired – with true wisdom – to be the kind of King God wanted him to be.

Solomon began pursuing all these things that would finally lead to his downfall and the destruction of his kingdom – a long life, riches and the accumulating of weapons to destroy his enemies became more important to Solomon than anything. He let everything go to his head, began to build temples to other gods, and abandoned the God of Moses and his forefathers.

Jesus teaches us that if we truly understood the value and impart of the Kingdom of God, and turn our whole life over to the pursuit of God’s Kingdom, then we have achieved true wisdom, and will satisfy our deepest desire. We will be like the learned scribe who was able to bring from our storeroom both the new and the old.