

A Radical Response Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, July 30, 2014
8:15 AM Jer 15:10, 16-21; **Mt 13:44-46** (There is one thing that makes life worth living: the kingdom of heaven, the power of that kingdom unleashed in our lives—and we cannot stop until we have it.)

A lot has been written about how Jesus uses figures of speech in **parables** that people can easily grasp and understand. That's actually not exactly true.

Anyone with any understanding would be aghast at these **figures of speech here**. They **suggest something that is actually preposterous from a business point of view**; from a worldly point of view, it's not explainable at all. No merchant would ever invest all he has in one pearl. That would be a terrible business model. You have heard yourself in common sense, "You don't put all your eggs in one basket." All the more for a businessman! The SEC says financial institutions have to have margins of liquidity, and that's true. They need cash to deal with emergencies. But this merchant has no cash anymore. And a pearl may not be very liquid, that is, it may not be able to be turned into cash very quickly. It's a hard asset.

Jesus' point is when it comes to finding what is really important in life, it's not a business proposition. It's not something to toy with. It's not something to negotiate. It is so important that **it requires** radical response, and **a radical response** of a total kind, **from the total being of oneself**. One's total will has to be into getting this. It can't be thinking about anything else. It has to push out of concern all other issues. That's how important it is. It's not one among many issues. **It is the issue, and the only issue!** And this is the way Jesus thought about the kingdom of heaven. It's the only issue, not one among many, not the most important one among many, the only one! And **if we seek the kingdom of heaven, then everything else will just fall into place.** Everything else will come along, even—even—

earthly prosperity; he even included that, **but only when the kingdom is first and when that is really the total choice.**

So this is something that requires a great deal of thought because **the kingdom of heaven cannot be grasped in one moment** the way we could buy a field, investing all our money into it—we could. Or we could put all our money into buying one pearl. We could do that. But we can't do that with the kingdom of heaven. It's ongoing. **But it has to be relentless,** a relentless search and seizure operation. **Because it is the kingdom of heaven it actually provides us with the meaning for living.** Without the kingdom of heaven there is no real reason for living. You may be carried along for a while by the desire to survive, which is natural. But that is not enough to overcome every problem, every challenge, every crisis, every dilemma—no way. You may have all kinds of interests in life, and they can be very entertaining, intriguing, time-consuming, and so on. But they are not going to give you sustenance and strength and courage when you really need it. No, **there is one thing that makes life worth living: the kingdom of heaven,** the power of that kingdom unleashed in our lives—and we cannot stop until we have it.