

A reading from the first book of Kings.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night;  
and God said, "Ask what I should give you."

And Solomon said,

"You have shown great and steadfast love  
to your servant my father David,  
because he walked before you in faithfulness,  
in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you;  
and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love,  
and have given him a son to sit on his throne today.

And now, O Lord my God,

you have made your servant king in place of my father David,  
although I am only a little child;

I do not know how to go out or come in.

And your servant is in the midst of the people  
whom you have chosen, a great people,  
so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted.

Give your servant therefore an understanding mind  
to govern your people,

able to discern between good and evil;

for who can govern this, your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.

God said to him,

"Because you have asked this,  
and have not asked for yourself long life or riches,  
or for the life of your enemies,

but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right,

I now do according to your word.

Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind;

no one like you has been before you

and no one like you shall arise after you."



Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:

## SECOND READING – A 17

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

We know that all things work together for good  
for those who love God,  
who are called according to his purpose.

For those whom God foreknew  
he also appointed to be conformed to the image of his Son,  
in order that he might be the firstborn  
among many brothers and sisters.

And those whom God predestined he also called;  
and those whom he called he also justified;  
and those whom he justified he also glorified.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – A 17

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spriti.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

*Glory to you, O Lord*

Jesus spoke to the crowds:

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field,  
which someone found and hid;  
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;

on finding one pearl of great value,  
he 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 caught fish of every kind;  
when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down,  
and put the good into baskets  
but threw out 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 furnace of fire,  
where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Have you understood all this?”

They answered, “Yes.”

And he said to them,

“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven  
is like the master of a household  
who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”



The **GOSPEL** of the **LORD**.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### Reading I: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

In the Hellenistic tradition, wisdom meant philosophical speculation. In the Old Testament tradition, on the other hand, wisdom had much more mundane significance. It included a practical know-how in various areas of life as well as the knowledge of God and of good and evil.

Chapters 3 to 11 of 1 Kings demonstrate Solomon's wisdom in many different spheres: as practical psychologist in the case of the two prostitutes (1 Kings 3:16-28); as administrator (1 Kings 4); as builder (1 Kings 5-7); as merchant (1 Kings 9).

Our passage today relates how he acquired this wisdom in a dream in which he prays for wisdom rather than for riches or for length of days. Wisdom is thus the supreme value of human life.

This reading was evidently chosen because of the parables of the treasure and the pearl that represent the kingdom of God as the supreme value for which no sacrifice is too great.

### Responsorial Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130

The wise person (note the last two lines in the final stanza) is the one who knows and keeps the commandments of YHWH.

The psalm is thus linked to the first reading, for the wise person loves the commandments of God "above fine gold" (third stanza), as Solomon chose wisdom rather than riches, and as Jesus in today's gospel urges the crowd to seek the kingdom of God the way a person would spare nothing to get hold of a treasure trove or a pearl of great price.

Thus, the psalm is also linked to the Gospel reading.

### Reading II: Romans 8:28-30

In the readings from Romans 8 that were read on the previous Sundays (Roman Lectionary), Paul has been speaking primarily of the suffering, the transitoriness, and the infirmities of human existence, including Christian existence. But again and again the hope of ultimate transformation and vindication keeps breaking through.

This week's reading forms a transition from the shadowy side of human and Christian existence to the glorious destiny that awaits the redeemed. Verse 28 states a proposition that was known to Paul's readers ("We know") and was apparently a religious maxim in Judaism. He then bases this maxim on the realities of Christian experience.

It is not just pious make-believe to say that everything will turn out all right in the end; it is an assurance based upon what the believers have already experienced from God: God foreknew them, predestined them to be conformed to the Son's image, called them, justified them, and, surprisingly—for we would expect this to be reserved until the final fulfillment—glorified them.

In other words, the Christian eschatological hope is not for something totally different from what we already have (“pie in the sky when we die”) but the ultimate fruition of our present life in Christ.

### **Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52**

The long form of this gospel contains the twin parables of the treasure and the pearl, followed by the parable of the dragnet and the concluding saying of the Christian scribe. The short form stops after the twin parables.

It is a pity that it has also dropped the saying about the Christian scribe, for this saying is closely related to the twin parables (the kingdom of God as the supreme value, of which the Christian scribe is the custodian).

It also provides an important clue to Matthew's self-understanding as an evangelist.

The evangelist takes “what is old,” that is, the gospel tradition as he has received it, and reapplies it to the new situation that confronts him and the church at his time. We have already seen him doing this in his treatment of the parables of the sower and the tares (his “redaction,” as New Testament scholars call it).

This process of reinterpreting the tradition of Jesus' words and works has continued ever since in the ongoing life of the church. The latest chapter in the history of exegesis (which is really what church history is all about) is accomplished when the preacher stands up on a Sunday and delivers the homily.

The test of faithful exegesis is whether it enables the old to be said today in a new situation.

This cannot be done simply by repeating the old as it stands, but only by reproducing the old in a new way so that it can say what it said in past situations and not something different. In other words, the saying about the Christian scribe describes the task of Christian hermeneutics.

Important as these considerations are for the self-understanding of the homilist and the self-understanding of the evangelist, they are not the main point that today's readings propose for our consideration.

As the first reading and the psalm show, the intention of this gospel is to speak of the kingdom of God as the supreme value to be preferred above all else, as a person would

even cheat (by hiding the treasure) in order to acquire some treasure trove of the owners of the field in which it was found.

Here we see an example of Jesus' propensity to use unattractive human behavior in his parables, as in the case of the Lucan parables of the unjust steward and the unjust judge.

This serves as a warning against treating the parables merely as moral lessons; rather, they light up worldly behavior as worthy of imitating in quite a different context. The kingdom of God is of such great value that the most drastic action is worth taking to gain it.

The parable of the pearl is of a rather different type. It involves no discreditable conduct. But like the parable of the hidden treasure, it holds up for our emulation in quite a different context the behavior of a man who was prepared to take drastic action to secure the object of his desire.

Matthew, of course, relates these pictures to the life of the church in his day. It was a church threatened by antinomianism (disregard of the moral law), by false prophets, and by persecution.

In that situation, Christians must be prepared to take drastic action to be accepted among the righteous at the last day. Hence, Matthew appends to the twin parables the further parable of the dragnet.

Reginald H. Fuller