

What's your greatest treasure? How much thought do we actually give that question?

21 years ago, I had to give it a lot of thought. One night after a 12-hour work day, my wife met me at the door and told me not to schedule anything for the following Sunday because we'd be attending a parish retreat that day. She told me that I was spending too much time at work; it was taking a toll on our family; and that she, God and I needed to talk about it.

You don't refuse an invitation like that.

The person who gave that retreat was Fr. Scott Seethalter. He covered a lot of ground that day, but the one thing he said that I'll never forget is: **Where you spend your time is where your treasure is.** The next day, I began to look for a new job. Two weeks ago my wife and I celebrated our 39th wedding anniversary.

[By the way, you'll see details in the bulletin about an encounter for married and engaged couples on September 27 at Sts. John and Paul Parish. Allen Hunt and Matthew Kelly, authors of some of the books we've distributed will be there. Tickets are available in the parish office.]

In our gospel today, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure. He tells us that not only our time, but everything we possess should be focused on getting there. But regardless of our effort, the treasure will always seek us because God loves each of us and wants His kingdom to be our home for eternity.

Our readings today define a three step-step process regarding that treasure:

1. As Solomon shows us in our reading from the Book of Kings, **we must realize what the treasure is.** He chooses wisdom over power and riches and is blessed by God. He recognizes that the treasure, the joy if you will, is in the serving, not in the being served.
2. Jesus tells us: **we must spare no cost to obtain that treasure and make it ours...**and, while he says they'll be consequences if we don't obtain it, He focuses on our joy if we do; and
3. St. Paul tells us that **we must protect our treasure at all costs,** despite the cost and even during the most difficult times...and if we...do we won't only be justified, we'll be glorified!

Our faith in Jesus and His promise of the kingdom must be our treasure.

Last week I was talking with a Catholic social worker friend. Four years ago she was assigned a 23-year old client who was living on the street with no income, no medical benefits, no high school education and no family support.

He had a criminal record, multiple unidentified medical and mental health needs and an extreme distrust of people, social agencies and the government. He was the kind of person many of us might prefer to see in jail...but not my friend. He was part of her treasure.

She discovered that he was raised in a dysfunctional family, in a drug-infested neighborhood--shuffled between a single mother and multiple other families. He was regularly starved and tied in a basement. He was verbally, physically and emotionally abused.

At age six, he ran away for the first time. By 13 he was living on the street. He robbed people and sold drugs. In his mind, he was alone and had no value, let alone any treasure.

But since 2010, my friend helped that young man get medical benefits, connected him with a doctor and got him off the streets. With her encouragement, he obtained his GED and is now enrolled at a local college.

Yet despite this progress, my friend is discouraged because her client may have to drop out of school because she can't find a \$5,000 grant for equipment he needs to pursue his major. Can you believe it? She believes that because she can't obtain that grant, she's failed him.

Her only failure is her inability to realize that her faith, and the sharing of it, have not only given this man HOPE, but introduced him to a Savior that he might otherwise not have had a chance to meet...whether he realizes that yet or not. What a treasure!

It's the treasure Jesus speaks about today...a faith that can bring us hope AND joy if we live it...a faith that can be the foundation on which to build our families and community. It's a gift freely given, it's a treasure we can't earn...but when we find it, it's a treasure that we must defend at all costs.

Each of us must make a decision. Each of us must voluntarily come to the conclusion that nothing...absolutely nothing makes any sense without God. We must embrace God, not fear Him. We must love God, not deny Him. We must trust God, not question Him.

We have Scripture, Apostolic Tradition and the Church to guide us.

So, in conclusion: **Find your Faith; Learn your Faith; Know your Faith; Live your Faith; Keep your Faith;** and like my social worker friend, **Share your Faith.** If you do, your treasure will indeed become the Kingdom of Heaven.