

28th. Sunday in Ordinary Time

Some of those who came to Mass at Mount Barker on Wednesday were a bit worried when they saw that the church car park and the land behind the church had been cordoned off with a long caution ribbon. But they need not have been concerned. It was a way to keep safe the children who had gathered for the Kid's Fun Day. The theme of the day was, "Where is God?", and some of the activities involved an extensive treasure hunt for things hidden throughout the church property. When children are looking for treasure they run to where they think it might be without seeing the possible dangers around them.

If we were setting out on a treasure hunt I wonder where we might be running to? Would we be able to identify ourselves with the person that we met in our reading from the Book of Wisdom today? "I prayed, and understanding was given to me; I entreated, and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me. I esteemed her more than scepters and thrones; compared to her I held riches as nothing."

Perhaps we might more easily identify ourselves with the man that we met in today's gospel. He was a very good man who wanted to follow Jesus but could not run to him, because he thought that he had found his treasure already. He asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit

eternal life. Jesus assured him that he already knew what God was asking of him by way of the commandments. He could honestly reply, "Master I have kept all these since my earlier days." But the man wanted to do more. And in his love for him Jesus told him what the next step should be if he was to take up the invitation to become one of his company. For this man it meant that he had to give away everything he owned so that he would be free enough to take the road and become one of his disciples.

In some ways Jesus was just giving him some practical advice. He could not become a member of Jesus band who were wandering around the country preaching the Word and healing people unless he travelled very lightly. But in other ways Jesus was calling this man and all of us to learn how to depend, not upon the possession that we have, but upon the God who provides them for us. We are told that this man's face fell when he heard those words of Jesus and that he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

Possessions can weigh us down. This seemed to be so foreign to the general understanding of faithful Jewish people. Wealth was seen to be a sign of God's favour. Being rich was a blessing from God. But Jesus cuts across that understanding. When Jesus tells his disciples that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,

the disciples ask him if anyone could be saved. “For humans it is impossible, but not for God; because everything is possible for God.” Jesus makes that very strong point that the work of salvation is God’s work, not ours. We can only receive the gift that God is giving to us. We cannot create the gift for ourselves.

At the beginning of the day on Wednesday the children listened to the story of Elijah on the mountain, standing at the mouth of the cave waiting for the Lord to pass by. God was not in the earthquake nor in the fire but in the sound of a gentle breeze. The children were then invited to listen to where God might be for them in the little things of the day ahead. Later in the morning when the children found one of the treasures they were looking for they found a scroll that would direct them on to the next treasure. Those scrolls could be seen as a little bit like finding a piece of scripture that helps us to know the direction that God is leading us.

Today’s reading from the letter to the Hebrews talks about the Word of God as being alive and active, cutting like a two-edged sword. “it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing can hide from him; everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.” Those words can be comforting, or they can be frightening until we remember who that Word of God is. That Word can

only be a Word of love. Yes, it will pierce the innermost part of our soul. But it will make its way there so that we can know deep within us how much we are loved. God’s Word is a gift to us to shed light upon the truth of who we are. It will often challenge us and call us back from where we have tried to find satisfaction and fulfillment. But so often the Word of God is spoken to us to give us hope and encouragement.

That is how Jesus ends the gospel today. Having called us to complete dependence upon him Jesus then assures us that God will repay many times over whatever we may have to give up to become the disciples of Jesus. We will be generously repaid in this life and in the life to come. We are not all called to that radical poverty that Jesus’ first disciples were living. But we are all called to live as if everything we have is gift. If we live with this kind of attitude of mind and faith, I suspect that like the children who gathered here on Wednesday we will discover that our whole world is full of treasures waiting to be found, treasures that will reveal something of who God is for us.