

**July 30, 2017 Hidden Treasure Homily:** Brothers and sisters, recently a citizen of the state of Ohio, Karl Kissner, had an unexpected stroke of good fortune. Inside a cardboard box that had been under a wooden dollhouse in his grandfather's attic, he found some old, vintage baseball cards. The cards were much smaller than the ones he remembered from his childhood. As a life-long baseball fan, the names on the cards were familiar to him. They were some of the greatest players of the game, all members of the Baseball Hall of Fame: Ty Cobb, Honus Wagner, Cy Young. Issued in the year 1910, the cards were untouched for over a century. The lucky man who stumbled upon the cards by chance hit the jackpot. The cards were later valued at 2.35 million dollars! When asked for a reaction to his discovery and learning the value of the cards, he said, "It's like finding the Mona Lisa in the attic".

In Matthew's thirteenth chapter, Jesus reveals the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. In the three parables of today's gospel, "hiddenness" is a dominant theme. Jesus speaks of a hidden treasure, the pearl of great price hidden in the shell of an oyster. The only purpose in their being hidden is their ultimately being found. The parable makes clear that one can't be idle. Sitting in bed or reclining in an easy chair is self defeating. One has to be active in the field in order to find the object of one's desire.

Perhaps a story once told by the Noble laureate, Elie Wiesel, a Jew, might prove helpful. Jehel, a little boy, comes running into the room of his grandfather, the famous Rabbi Baruch. Big tears are rolling down his cheeks. "My friend", he says, "has given up on me. He is very unfair and mean to me". The rabbi asked for some explanation. "We were playing hide and seek. I was hiding so well that he could not find me. But then he simply gave up and went home. Isn't that mean? The master then caresses the boy's face. He himself has tears in his eyes. And he says, "Yes, this is not nice. But it is the same way with God. He is in hiding... and we do not seek him. God is hiding and people do not look for Him".

The evangelist, Matthew, clearly wants his readers to know that Jesus is "the pearl of great price" and his Word is the treasure once buried in the field but now found, and is a gift for all peoples. What follows is joy. "Out of joy (he) goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." (Mt.13:44)

In his letter to the Christian community at Philippi, St. Paul eloquently expresses in heartfelt words, the ineffable joy of discovering Jesus. "Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him." (Phil. 3:7-9a)

In the modern quest for happiness and the search for meaning, too many have not discovered Jesus. Even more regrettable are those who have abandoned him. Embracing the values of a secular, Godless world always leads to a dead end. Despair usually follows. But just consider how lives have been transformed by their encounter with Christ. The joy-filled lives of the saints are an extraordinary testimony to the wisdom revealed in the parables and the blessings of the faith. Conversely, idleness and walking aimlessly without any purpose or direction in life is a life not well lived. Perhaps we all need to re-discover Christ again. If we do so, we will win the only lottery that truly counts!

Amen!