

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Recovery from lust addiction involves more than learning to say no. It requires learning to say yes to something greater. For years, many of us devoted tremendous energy to pursuing experiences that promised relief, excitement, affirmation, or intimacy. Those promises felt convincing, but they never delivered what they offered. Recovery begins to change our desires by teaching us to recognize what is truly worth giving our lives to.

This Sunday's gospel presents several brief parables about the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:44-52). In two of them, Jesus describes a man who discovers a treasure hidden in a field and a merchant who finds a pearl of great price. In both cases, each person joyfully sells everything to possess what is truly valuable.

Jesus invites us to ask a direct question: What treasure is shaping my life?

For those recovering from lust addiction, this question reaches beneath outward behavior. Lust does not simply tempt us toward actions. It persuades us that satisfaction, comfort, affirmation, or escape can be found apart from God. We pursue these counterfeit treasures believing they will finally quiet our loneliness or fill the emptiness within us. Instead, they leave us increasingly isolated and hungry for more.

Recovery reveals that freedom requires more than removing destructive behaviors. It requires replacing false treasures with the One who truly satisfies. Christ does not simply ask us to give something up. He invites us into a relationship that is infinitely greater than anything we leave behind. Chastity is

not merely the absence of lust. It is the freedom to love rightly because Christ has become our greatest desire.

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous expresses an important principle when it says, "Half measures availed us nothing" (p. 59). Recovery cannot flourish while we continue bargaining with old patterns or keeping one foot in our former way of life. We gradually discover that surrender is not losing something valuable. It is letting go of what never truly satisfied so we can receive what does.

Step Three marks this turning point. We make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God. Step Eleven strengthens that decision through prayer and meditation, helping us seek God's presence instead of chasing temporary relief. These practices reshape our desires over time. Instead of asking, "How close can I get to temptation?" we begin asking, "What leads me closer to Christ?"

King Solomon models this same wisdom in the first reading (1 Kings 3:5, 7-12). Offered anything he desires, he asks for an understanding heart rather than power or wealth. Recovery calls us to make a similar choice. We seek wisdom instead of fantasy, truth instead of illusion, and authentic intimacy instead of counterfeit connection.

This transformation unfolds one day at a time. We choose honesty over secrecy, accountability over isolation, and prayer over self-reliance. We continue practicing the habits that protect sobriety while allowing God to purify our hearts. Over time, we discover that the deepest freedom is not simply resisting temptation. It is finding that temptation no longer

holds the same power because our hearts have been captured by something greater.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the pearl of great price because nothing compares to life with Christ. As we continue in recovery, we are invited to choose that treasure again each day. The more we discover His love, the less appealing the counterfeit treasures become, and the more fully we experience the freedom for which we were created.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What counterfeit "treasures" have you most often pursued in place of the intimacy and peace that Christ offers?
- How has your understanding of chastity changed as you have grown in recovery?
- What practical choice can you make this week that reflects Christ, rather than temporary relief, as your greatest treasure?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

RESP. PS. Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130

SECOND READING Romans 8:28-30

GOSPEL Matthew 13:44-52