

# What do You Treasure the Most?

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle A | July 26, 2026

## WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember when I was a few years into my L.W.O.P. (life without parole) sentence. I built devices people could use for drug use. I charged others small portions of drugs for the use of my equipment. My desire to use drugs would sometimes outweigh my greed to make money. I remember confiding in my Mom. I told her drugs had a power over me that I had problem controlling. She would tell me, "Brian, tell yourself, from this day forward, you will never use again. Mean this, feel this in your heart, and keep telling yourself this until it is telling you it is true." This worked for a while but eventually, excuses for using would creep back into my weak mind and I would binge. I remember feeling worse than a failure. I would call my Mom and explain to her my moment of weakness.

Since that time, I've encountered countless circumstances where drugs were offered for free, and were even pushed on me. But I'm done. There is nothing left in me that believes any type of 'high' is okay. I stopped use of all drugs because I don't like who I became when I first allowed myself to begin using. I don't need to mask not feeling whole by getting high. I build my wholeness by repairing my life. Yes, I am in prison. Yes, I am here due to my own actions. Yes, I would choose freedom if it were my choice to make. But it isn't, so what freedom can I choose for myself while in prison? I have the choice to become a better person – a person I would have looked up to and listened to when I lacked direction I recognized. Experiencing self-worth can be obtained mostly anywhere I've been because it begins as a thought.

- Brian, who is in a California state prison.



Art by T. Larimer

## PENITENTIAL RITE

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

**R. Amen.**

## OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:

Loving God,

You shower us with so many blessings and guide our lives in so many ways.

Help us to be mindful always of the many gifts that you give us and inspire us to use these gifts to bring your love to others.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**



# LITURGY OF THE WORD

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

The LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you." Solomon answered: "O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed my father David; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act. I serve you in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong. For who is able to govern this vast people of yours?" The LORD was pleased that Solomon made this request. So God said to him: "Because you have asked for this—not for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies, but for understanding so that you may know what is right—I do as you requested. I give you a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no one to equal you."

The Word of the Lord.

**R. Thanks be to God.**

## Second Reading: Romans 8:28-30

Brothers and sisters: We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

The Word of the Lord.

**R. Thanks be to God.**

## Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-66, 127-128

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

I have said, O LORD, that my part is to keep your words.

The law of your mouth is to me more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

Let your kindness comfort me according to your promise to your servants.

Let your compassion come to me that I may live,

for your law is my delight.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

For I love your commands

more than gold, however fine.

For in all your precepts I go forward; every false way I hate.

**R. Lord, I love your commands.**

## Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52

Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. "Do you understand all these things?" They answered, "Yes." And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**



# MEDITATION: HOW TO BE CLOSER TO GOD

*(from the eyes of  
a disciple)*

it was early morning  
we were trying  
to leave the city  
people were arriving but  
it was time to move on

a young man with servants  
ran toward the group  
we all stopped  
i recognized this one

abel was now kneeling  
before jesus  
his family owned  
huge amounts of land  
and had lots of treasures

abel saying  
jesus  
i heard you preaching  
at the lake last night  
i could not sleep  
i kept asking myself  
how does one  
grow closer to god?

jesus inviting this one  
to sit on a bench  
in the plaza

so abel  
you would like to  
be closer to god?  
do you keep the  
commandments?  
do you respect the law?

jesus  
ever since i was young  
i have been faithful  
in keeping all the  
commandments  
but when i was listening  
to you at the lake  
and watched how  
people responded to you  
i knew i had never  
experienced a master  
like you  
something happened  
within me  
i knew i wanted to be  
closer to god  
i knew i wanted to  
meet with you  
have even heard  
you can heal the sick  
the intensity

of abel was so  
noticeable clearly  
he was used to getting  
what he wanted in life  
even now having  
two servants with him  
it was clear that  
all his needs  
were attended to

so abel  
who do you think  
is in control of your life?  
have you ever gone  
without eating for a day?  
have you ever had  
the experience of not getting  
what you wanted?

jesus  
i give generously  
to the needy

no abel  
i am talking about  
something else  
we are about to  
leave this village  
i invite you now  
to come with us  
to live with  
the forgotten

this group lives  
in the village nearby  
where we are going  
their sons have been  
killed by the romans  
many in the village  
are widows  
we will spend  
two days there

it was the first time  
that abel was wordless  
he did not know  
what to say

abel  
i ask you again  
the same question  
who do you think  
is in control of your life?

jesus called  
a young man over  
he was the same age  
as abel  
jonathan  
show abel the marks  
on your arms

that you received  
from the romans  
when you were imprisoned  
abel looking at scars  
from torn up skin

so abel  
you asked me how  
you can be closer to god?  
maybe to be close to god  
means you are part  
of this struggle  
so that the oppressed  
do not suffer so unjustly  
what do you say?  
would you like to  
come with us?  
would you really like  
to be closer to god?

abel froze  
did not say anything  
what consequences  
would this bring  
to his life?  
what would  
his relatives think?  
he had social gatherings  
he needed to attend

this was the moment  
abel could respond  
to the invitation  
to be closer to god but  
abel was not expecting  
such a radical proposal

to leave everything  
he had and to go and  
work with those  
whose lives have  
been destroyed  
by the powerful?  
what would happen  
if he really did  
follow jesus?  
what would his life  
be like?

there was a fleeting  
movement  
when he considered  
leaving everything  
maybe then  
he would finally  
feel close to god

this thought was  
too much  
jesus i'm sorry  
but i can't let go

of my lifestyle  
i just couldn't do that  
the price is too much

jesus' eyes saddened  
abel fled through the plaza  
fleeing jesus' invitation

i came over  
and sat down  
next to jesus  
i could feel his sadness  
and disappointment

jesus stayed silent  
for a long time  
then saying  
how hard it is  
to find happiness  
if you don't live  
your life for others

abel thinks happiness  
lies in all of his possessions  
but how wrong he is

if he had come with us  
and helped cook  
for the sick in the village  
or if he had spoken  
with the mother  
whose sons  
have been killed  
maybe he would have  
been changed  
maybe he would not  
have stayed the same  
so really  
abel did not want  
to change but  
instead grow closer  
to the idol of security  
and comfort

to be closer to my abba  
is about giving away  
everything to then  
receive everything

the kingdom of heaven  
is worth more  
than anything else  
in the world



**REFLECTION:** I remember a time I found a treasure, and it helped me change my ways...  
I remember... I remember...

### OUR FATHER

Let us pray with confidence to the Father  
in the words our Savior gave us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy Kingdom come,  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us,  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**R. For the kingdom, the power and the glory  
are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

### SIGN OF PEACE

Jesus, you said to your apostles: "I leave you  
peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our  
sins, but on the faith of your Church, and  
grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom  
where you live forever and ever. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**R. And with your spirit.**

### LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:  
**Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:  
**Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:  
**Grant us peace.**

This is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away  
the sins of the world. Happy are we who are called  
to his supper.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter  
under my roof, but only say the word and my  
soul shall be healed.**

### COMMUNION

### CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray:

Lord God,

You appeared to Solomon and offered to give him  
anything he asked for and he chose a wise heart.  
Give us the courage to make the right choices in  
life. Help us to put our trust and joy not in  
perishable things but in your Son, his Good News  
and the kingdom he came to build among us.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**

