

What Are We Prepared To Do?

In the movie, *The Untouchables*, Elliot Ness, a government agent, is sent to Chicago to put an end to the illegal activities of Al Capone. On one occasion, Ness and his men made a raid on one of Capone's warehouses expecting to find a shipment of whiskey only to find that the crates contained parasols. Capone had been tipped off by an informer and the illegal shipment of whiskey had disappeared.

After the failed raid, Ness was very discouraged and was hanging his head. His friend, Malone, a hard-bitten Chicago cop of many years, asked him: 'Is that all there is? Are you giving up?' When Ness asked Malone what he meant, Malone returned this question: 'What are you prepared to do?' Ness' raid had failed but Malone was asking him if he was prepared to commit himself fully to the battle and to do whatever it took to bring Capone down.

In the Gospel for this Sunday (Matt. 13: 44-52), Jesus tells two parables that speak to the necessity of commitment and He challenges us to answer the same question asked by Malone.

First, He spoke about a person who found a treasure in a field and, after burying it there, he sold everything he owned to buy the field.

In the second parable, Jesus spoke about a merchant who was searching for fine pearls. When he found a pearl of great value, he sold everything he had in order to buy it.

In both parables, Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of Heaven but He wasn't speaking about our destination in the next life. He was referring to the Kingdom of Heaven that we find here on earth; right here, right now.

Maybe the treasure or the pearl of great value is our spouse and family. We need to have the wisdom to discern the real value of what we see every day and perhaps take for granted. Then, we must have the commitment and the fortitude to pay the price for that treasure. We may not have to sell everything we own but we may have to change our long-established ways of thinking. We may have to endure criticism and ridicule from our friends. We may have to give up or scale back our ambitions for career and money.

In the First Reading (1Kgs 3: 5-12), Solomon asked God for the gift of wisdom, an understanding mind to discern between good and evil. Let us pray that God will grant us the wisdom to be able to discern the value of the treasures and pearls that are all around us and the willingness to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to keep them. In every situation, the question for us is: What are we prepared to do?