

HOMILY 17th Sunday Ordinary Time

July 26, 2026

Most of us have probably fantasized about winning the lottery. In fact, how many people have had a conversation with at least one other person about what you would do with the money if you won the lottery. Most of us. However, we do know that our chances of winning the lottery are miniscule. And the chances that winning the lottery would have a positive effect on our lives is not very good at all. We have seen many reports of how winning the lottery has destroyed people's lives. I think the truth is, once you have enough, more money or more material possessions do not have a big impact on your happiness and are not very important.

In the Gospel reading today we have another parable. We encounter an individual finding a treasure and an individual finding a pearl of great price. We do not get any details about what the treasure and the pearl of great price represent, but my guess is that they do not represent money or material possessions because the parable says that they give up all of their material possessions to get the treasure or the pearl of great price. I think the treasure or the pearl of great price represents finding our purpose in life. This is what gives your life meaning. God gave each of us specific talents, skills or charisms, whatever you want to call them, and he wants us to use them to love and serve others.

Your purpose, what gives your life meaning, changes over time depending upon the season of your life. What works during one season does not work in another. Sometimes we get stuck in one season too long and do not move on to the next. An example of this. If you are 17 years old, keeping your options open may give your life meaning. It is about trying many things and identifying what you like and what you are good at. They are usually the same thing; you are good at them because you like them and you like them because you are good at them. At 37 years of age keeping your options open is not so helpful. At this age you should probably have identified things that give your life meaning and be making a commitment to these things. If you keep

your options open for too long your life may have no direction. If you are a parent with children, your purpose, what gives your life meaning, is focused upon your children. But once your children launch, your purpose needs to change. Your children need to learn to be more independent. You will still help them, but the focus of your life should change. Maybe it will be a greater focus upon your spouse. It may involve reestablishing friendships. Maybe it will be more of a focus upon volunteer activities. When you reach retirement age, your career is going away as well as is your focus upon saving for the future. This is the time of your life that you have been saving for. Now is the spending time. In retirement, you will need a new purpose. Playing golf or having lunch is probably not going to be what gives your life purpose.

If you are unsure of your purpose at this season of your life, I am going to suggest that you do something psychologists call a meaning audit. Every day write down something very specific that gave your life meaning that day. What felt meaningful. This is not what made you happy or what went right. It is what gave your life meaning that day. It may have been challenging or difficult. It may not have worked out the way you hoped, but it gave your life meaning. An example of this is doing an intervention. Have you ever tried to do an intervention for someone you love. It is always hard and it frequently does not work. No one wants to go to rehab. But it may be very meaningful knowing you have done everything possible to help someone. After a few weeks, look at your entries and look for the trends. You want to make sure you spend a significant amount of time doing these types of things. You can still do the things that make you happy, but also do the things that are meaningful. Driving your kids to soccer practice may not be meaningful but maybe the conversation you have in the car on the way may be. What gives your life meaning is probably not money or material possessions; it is probably something more spiritual. It is probably how you use your gifts and talents to serve others.