My friends, if God were to show up in your room some night and say, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you?” What would be your response? I believe the readings this Sunday are all about discerning what is most important in life. And these readings come at a good time. We are here in the middle of summer. Many take their vacations during this time of year. Even for those who work through summer, the days are so long that it is easy to become restful. Whether we enjoy a nice stroll in the woods, or a BBQ with family and friends, or just a quiet evening in the backyard reading a book, summer can be a time to rest and recreate a bit.

And when we look at the word recreation we see the words re-create. Every so often, it is important to take time a re-create in the truest sense of the word. Summer is a great time to take time to ponder the great questions of life, universe and everything. Summer is a good time to take time to reflect on who we are in the universe, what our place is in the universe, to ask questions such as “What is the Kingdom of Heaven like?” and, “How do I get there?”.

It might have been a summer day in a Galilean meadow when the disciples asked Jesus over lunch what is the kingdom of heaven like? Jesus probably turned the disciples attention to the field in which they were sitting and said to them, “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 had and buys that field.” Jesus is suggesting that a worthy disciple is someone who would go to drastic lengths, re-hiding the treasure he found in the field, selling everything he had so that he could purchase the field that contained the treasure. This seems rather extreme. But, Jesus continues, “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 had and buys it.” At face value, this doesn’t sound very sensible. Jesus is suggesting that discipleship looks like taking drastic, or some would even say, foolish action so to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven. Now the disciples had already left their homes, left their jobs, left everything to follow Jesus. And so, perhaps Jesus was answering the disciples’ question by validating their decision to leave their homes to follow him.

On the other hand, this Gospel passage I think is also meant to be a challenge to any would be follower of Jesus, because we are challenged to ask the question of ourselves, how motivated are we when it comes to seeking the Kingdom of God? How motivated are we really? How about that for a mid-Summer recreational contemplation? Ask yourself sometime, on a scale from one to ten, how motivated are we to orient our lives around the things of heaven? Are we ready to metaphorically sell everything for the pearl of great price? This is to say, is everything in our lives secondary to following our heavenly vocation? My friends, summer is a good time to ponder these kinds of questions and answer them truthfully, for we may gain a little wisdom about where we are in the Spirit life.
Indeed, the readings this Sunday do challenge us to consider what is really important in life. It might have been a summer’s night when God showed up in Solomon’s bedroom, giving him the opportunity to ask for anything he wanted. God tells Solomon, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you”. Solomon could have chosen a long life. Solomon could have chosen riches. Solomon could have chosen to have all his enemies put to death. Think of all the things Solomon could have asked for!

You see, Solomon could have asked for anything. He could have asked for all kinds of ego gratification. But he doesn’t. He doesn’t. He asks for something else, discovering who he is in the process. Solomon discovers that he is less interested in power over others and more interested in being a person who really cares about making wise, just and holy decisions. Solomon is less interested in self-promotion and more interesting in understanding the hearts of others. Solomon is someone who values knowing the difference between right and wrong as more valuable than all the gold or pleasures this world has to offer. In short, Solomon values wisdom more than anything else. God is so impressed with Solomon’s answer that He gives Solomon this gift. God says to Solomon, “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 equal to you.”

My friends, a good question to ask while we enjoy the quiet of summer: if God were to show up in your bedroom and ask you what he asked Solomon, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you.” What would be your response? Would it be to win the lotto, to live a long life, or would it be something more profound? If we answer this question honestly, I believe this might shed some light on who we are, where we are at in the Spirit life and how close we are to the Kingdom of Heaven. Is our ultimate concern for riches, pleasure, ego glorification, or power or is our ultimate concern for Jesus Christ for in whom things like riches, pleasure, friendships, self-esteem, and fulfillment all find their balance? The wisdom here is: what good is long life if our days are filled with egocentric misery? What good are riches and fame if they destroy us in the process because we lack wisdom? If we seek first the Kingdom of God, whether we live long lives or short lives, our days are filled with meaning. If we seek first the Kingdom of God, whether we are rich or poor, our lives will be filled with meaningful relationships in our love for God and neighbor.

And so, during the summer, we often take opportunities for recreation. The readings this Sunday give us an opportunity to re-create ourselves as well. What are the areas in our lives we need to seriously consider changing to better reflect what God wants for us? Is it a matter of taking better care of ourselves and our families? Is it a matter of taking better care of those in need around us? Is it a matter of taking more time for God in our lives through prayer and reflection? Jesus reminds us at the end of the Gospel reading that we do not have unlimited time to address what we need to be taking care of in our lives and that at the end of time there will be an accounting. However, if we ponder on what our answer would be if God were to invite us, “Ask something of me and I will give it to you”, we might be surprised that all the things we think we need we really don’t need. When it comes to our salvation, God has already given us everything by giving us Jesus Christ.