

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time – (Year A)- July 26, 2026

- What is the smallest country in the world by land area?
- What is the only bird that can fly backwards?
- Who was the first African American to win an Academy Award?

Trivial Pursuit was created in 1979 by Canadian journalists Chris Haney and Scott Abbott after a friendly game of Scrabble. What began as a casual idea became a global phenomenon, selling over 100 million copies in 26 countries. It remains one of the great classic board games, built entirely around knowing the right answers.

The game is most enjoyable when everyone knows something, but no one knows everything. However, when one player takes the game far too seriously, desperately wanting to “win” — and becoming miserable, and making everyone else miserable, when they don’t. For that player, the “pursuit” of victory is anything but trivial.

Yes, life is full of pursuits.

- As children, we pursue ice cream after the soccer game, staying up past bedtime, or escaping our chores.
- As adolescents, we pursue acceptance from the cool kids, getting away with things our parents don’t know about, mastering an instrument, or getting our first job.

- As adults, our pursuits multiply: careers, hobbies, friendships, status, money, affirmation, respect, popularity — and the great one, love.

It's a long list, and it barely scratches the surface.

So, the question becomes: **Are these pursuits trivial?**

In one sense, yes — and in another sense, no. The value of what we pursue is not equal.

The pursuit of a life-long partner is obviously more significant than the pursuit of a few extra minutes before bedtime. Some pursuits matter little, some matter somewhat, and some shape the entire course of our lives.

But they can become “trivial” when we elevate something small to the top of our priority list, when we treat something minor as if it were ultimate.

Because there is something that belongs at the top. Something that should sit above every other desire, every other longing, every other ambition. Something of greatest worth.

And today's readings ask us to consider what that is — to examine what we treasure, what we seek, what we chase.

Jesus uses images of the kingdom to make His point. In Matthew, He describes the kingdom as a treasure hidden in a field, as a merchant searching for fine pearls, as a net cast into the sea, and — as we heard last week — as a man sowing good seed in his field.

Taken together, these images reveal the kingdom as something precious, abundant, life-giving. A reality already present and still unfolding, in which every good thing flourishes. A reality that enriches, transforms, and infuses everything with meaning.

But we do not always live that way. We often chase things that, in the end, matter very little.

That is why Solomon's story is so striking. He could have asked for anything. Wealth, power, victory, long life. How many of us wish we were in that position? And how many of us would have answered as Solomon did?

Solomon asked for one thing: an understanding heart. And God told him that this choice revealed his wisdom.

An understanding heart knows right from wrong. It knows God — not just believes in Him. It recognizes what is just and fair and decent. It puts others first. It sees the bigger picture. It is shaped by compassion and mercy.

And most importantly, an understanding heart knows the one pursuit that is never trivial: a faithful life with God as our highest priority — in every thought, every relationship, every decision.

That is the pursuit that orders all others. That is the treasure worth selling everything to obtain. That is the pearl of great price.

And there is nothing trivial about that.