

ESF, Lord's day service message
10/19/2014

The Hidden Treasure
Matthew 13:44-46

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

In ancient times, most of treasures were hidden in secret places, because there was no safe deposit banking system. One of the common ways to hide the treasures was to put them in jars and bury them in the ground. Then occasionally, the people who hid the treasures disappeared or died without letting anyone know the secret place of the hidden treasures. Then the treasures would remain hidden in the field until someone accidentally found them.

The Greek word for treasure in this story is 'thesauros'. This word does not mean a coin or bag of gold, but a huge treasure, like what is contained in a house full of treasure. By today's standards, it could be millions or even billions of dollars worth of treasure. So if anyone could find such treasure, that person would do everything he could to obtain it.

Among treasures, pearls were regarded as one of the best treasures in ancient time. Pearls were obtained from the oysters in the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean. To obtain the pearls, people had to dive into the ocean risking their lives. So the pearls were very precious jewels. They were so expensive that only very rich people could afford to purchase them. Here in this story, the merchant found the best pearls. Such pearls were worthy to be obtained at all costs. So the merchant sold everything he had to obtain the pearl.

By these stories, Jesus compares such treasure and pearls with the kingdom of heaven.

What Jesus means by the kingdom of heaven is the kingdom which God reigns both on earth and in the eternity through His Son, Christ. Why then is the kingdom of heaven the hidden treasure? And how can we obtain the treasure?

It is hidden

First, its truth is spiritual.

If everyone understood the gospel and believed it to be true, then the number of Christians would increase tremendously. The streets would be empty on Sundays. Every church would be filled to overflowing. And most of the Sunday sports games would be cancelled. But that doesn't happen. Why? Because the truth is hidden from their eyes. Not because it hasn't been revealed, and proclaimed, and preached. It has. But even though it's right there in plain view, right there in the Scriptures, people can't see it. Because it is matter of spiritual truth and men are naturally blind to the spiritual truth. Only a person whose spiritual eyes are opened by God's grace can see the truth.

The disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" Jesus replied, "*The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them . . . This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."* – Matthew 13:10-11, 13

Second, its value is matter of heart

The value of the kingdom is hidden because it's a change that takes place in the heart. Jesus says, "*The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:20-21). It's a process of inner transformation, in which we become more and more like Christ. Yes, the effects of these changes can be observed, but the process of change itself is invisible.

Third, its ultimate fulfillment is in the future.

The kingdom of heaven has two aspects. One aspect is that it has been manifested on earth through God's fulfilled promises. Another aspect is that it will be accomplished in the future. When Christ returns, and this creation is destroyed and replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, then his kingdom will be fully revealed in all its glory and splendor and power. But until then, it's hidden.

It has priceless value

1. Righteousness, peace and joy.

The essence of the kingdom of heaven is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Christ gives righteousness, peace and joy. Romans 14:17 says, *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* These three gifts are the most valuable of all treasures to make our lives happy and content.

Righteousness means a right relationship with God. When you are in a right relationship with God, you have peace with God (Romans 5:1). God will listen to your prayer. God will protect you from all harms. God will provide you with the best according to His perfect will. Peace with God gives peace in our hearts also. Joy is fruit of the Holy Spirit that lasts regardless of circumstances.

The value of these gifts are priceless.

There is a book by John Steinbeck entitled "The Pearl," which was written about a pearl of great value. The story goes something like this:

A scorpion bit the baby of a man named Kino. In order to get money to pay for a doctor, Kino went diving for pearls. During his dive he found the "Pearl of the World," the largest pearl ever found. Through the course of the story, many people tried to steal the pearl, and Kino killed some of them. His wife pleaded for him to get rid of the pearl on numerous occasions, but they needed it to pay for a doctor. Near the end

of the story, the doctor gave the baby poison, robbers chased them down, and after Kino killed the robbers, the baby died. At the very end Kino threw the pearl back into the ocean.

In their attempts to get that pearl, people lied, cheated, stole, and killed. That is what always happens to the people in this world who try to make their lives happy with visible treasures.

But the treasures of the kingdom of heaven- righteousness, peace and joy never bring such miseries. They can never be stolen by robbers or lost by tragedies in this world. Jesus says: *store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal* (Matthew 6:20). They remain firm and safe in all circumstances.

2. Power that overcomes all

The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power (1 Corinthians 4:20).

Jesus is the king of the kingdom of heaven. King Jesus has conquered what is the biggest problem of all – death.

1 Corinthians 15:26 says, *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

1 Corinthians 15:54 says, ... *"Death has been swallowed up in victory.*

Also in the kingdom there is power to defeat the power of the Devil. 1 John 3:8 says, ... *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

If you have the power to overcome the power of death, and the power of the Devil, what kind of power can't you overcome? No power can stand against you. No matter what happens to you, you still have hope in that power. Through that power people's lives can also be transformed. Countless people have been testifying how their lives are transformed through that power.

The cost to obtain the treasure

Both of these parables involve men who gladly sell everything they have

to pay for the treasures. By these two stories, Jesus tells us that there is a cost to pay to obtain the treasures in the kingdom of heaven.

It does not mean that we have to sacrifice everything to enter the kingdom of heaven (to gain salvation). We can enter the kingdom of heaven only by God's grace. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of grace.

When you accept Jesus as the Lord of your life – you immediately enter into the kingdom of God. All the treasures of the kingdom of heaven cannot be obtained until we come to grace. For it is by God's grace that the treasures are found, it is by His grace that this kingdom can be entered into.

Here, cost is the cost to follow Christ as his disciple and fully enjoy the gifts given by the king.

Jesus clarified that matter when someone said unto him, "Lord, I will follow you wherever you go" (Luke 9:57). Here was a man who wanted to be a follower of Jesus. And Jesus responded by saying, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head*" (Luke 9:58).

To follow Jesus we must be ready to sacrifice anything and everything.

Also in Matthew 16:24, Jesus said to his disciples, "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*"

Jesus said, in essence, "Here's the price for following me. You give up your comfort and everything and I'll give you the treasure of my kingdom."

Discipleship means not only looking up at the cross, but also carrying the cross and following Jesus.

If you've been following Christ for very long, you already know that. You know what it means to struggle, and suffer, and sacrifice in your walk with Christ.

However, with these stories, Jesus is not only teaches us sacrifice, but also the willingness of sacrifice. The people who find the treasure and pearls joyfully sacrifice everything. They don't regret it. They don't complain about the sacrifice they have to make. In fact, they don't even consider it to be a sacrifice. Because when they compare the cost they pay with the value of the treasures they gain, the cost is nothing. The joy in obtaining the treasures is far greater than the pain they get through paying the cost. So, they are willing to pay the cost.

Missionary Jim Elliot wrote, shortly before he was martyred by the Auca Indians that he had gone to serve, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

You can fully possess and enjoy the kingdom treasure only when you sacrifice everything you have. But if you know the value of the treasure, it must be a joy for you to make sacrifices; indeed, you must consider them to be no sacrifice.

The treasure of Christ's kingdom costs us the desires and love of our heart. It costs us the desires of our eyes, ears and mouth. We voluntarily choose not to watch everything we might like to see, because we know it is not pleasing to God and is a stumbling block to our own spiritual growth. It costs us the desires of our ears. We are willing to sacrifice listening to men's word in order to listen to the word of Christ. It cost us the desires of our mouth. We watch the words that come out from our mouth and the type of food and drinks that go into our mouth. To control our tongues and strong urges of our appetite may be painful, but we are willing to do so because we know peace and victory which the Lord gives us through such sacrifice is far greater than the pain.

We voluntarily say no to some things we want to get, to make ourselves available to be used by Christ in the lives of others. Because His love for us is so great that we are willing to sacrifice any love for anything or anybody in this world to obtain Christ's love. Sometimes, we may have to sacrifice our love for our own family to love Christ. There is pain. But we know that by loving Christ first, we will receive many blessings of the Lord for our family also. In Mark 10:29-30, Jesus confirms that- *I tell you the truth...no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.* So we are willing to sacrifice our love for our family for the sake of Christ.

Paul testified the same thing in Philippians 3:8-9.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Did Paul make sacrifices to follow Christ? Certainly he did, but he did so with joy knowing what he gained.

If you find and know the treasures in Christ, you will be willing to sacrifice your desires for anything in this world to obtain these treasures. You are able to sacrifice all things.

Think about the unfathomable treasures in Christ. Trust in his promise of these treasures. Then the Lord will give you joy that surpasses all joys in this world.