

ESF, Lord's day service message
10/7/2018

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. ⁴⁵"Again, 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.

A widow, shortly after her husband's death, was going through his papers. She found a couple of old certificates, yellowed with age and crumbling into dust. They had been made out to her husband more than fifty years ago. A company had written out these certificates and they seemed to indicate that her husband had invested some money with the company, way back before they married.

She read them over a couple of times, didn't really understand all the legal terms. She thought about the fact that they were buried at the bottom of his desk drawer and that he had never said anything about them. She concluded that they did not have any value and she threw them into the garbage.

A couple of weeks later she had a call from her lawyer, asking her if there were any other assets to be dealt with in the estate. The lawyer asked, "Did your husband have any investments? Did he lend any money to anyone?" She told the lawyer about the papers. Guess what?! It was 5,000 dollars worth of investment. With accumulated interest over fifty years, it could

be well over \$30,000! She lost the money because she did not know the value of the paper.

If we do not recognize the value of the treasure we have, we are unable to utilize the treasure, or we may even lose the treasure.

The Greek word for treasure in this story is ‘thesauros.’ This word does not mean a bag of gold, but a huge treasure, like what is contained in a house full of treasure. By today’s value, it could be millions or even billions of dollars worth of treasure. In ancient days, the owners of treasures hid the treasures in secret places only they knew.

By this story, Jesus compares such hidden treasures with the kingdom of heaven. Why then is the kingdom of heaven the hidden treasure? How can we recognize this treasure and obtain this 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 sports games would be cancelled. But that doesn’t happen. Why? Because the truth is hidden from the eyes of people. Not that it hasn’t been revealed and proclaimed. 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 a matter of spiritual truth and natural men are blind to the spiritual truth. Only a person whose spiritual eyes are open by God’s grace can they see the truth. If you want to find this treasure, pray that God may open your spiritual eyes as the

Psalmist prays: *Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law* (Psalm 119:18).

Second, its value is a matter of the heart

The value of the kingdom is hidden because it takes place in the heart. It has to do with love, joy, hope and peace in the heart. Yes, the effects of these treasures can be observed. But the value of these treasures may be easily ignored by visible and physical treasures. If you want to find these treasures, seek what can satisfy your heart more than what is visible.

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, his kingdom will be fully revealed in all its glory and splendor and power. Until then, the treasures of God's kingdom are not fully revealed. They are still hidden. If you want to gain this treasure, put your hope in the new heaven and the new earth.

It has a 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 making 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 harm. God will provide you with the best according to His perfect will. Peace with God gives peace in our hearts also. Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit that lasts regardless of circumstances.

The value of these gifts is priceless. It will never be stolen, broken, taken, or destroyed. It will never bring harm to us as worldly treasures often do. It will always be the source of blessings.

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 usually happenstance 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. Super natural power and eternal life

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 and gives us eternal life.

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.*

Some years ago, USA Today reported the results of a Roper Starch Worldwide survey of the wealthiest 1 percent of U.S. households or the 1 million households that have an annual income of at least \$250,000 or a net worth at least \$2.5 million. They were asked what they were willing to pay for various sources of happiness, from being president to a place in heaven.

Two items were worth less than \$100,000. At the bottom of the list was "being president," which was worth only \$55,000 to respondents; even "great beauty" was worth much more - \$83,000.

The next three items made a jump to the \$200,000s. For "reunion with a lost love," the rich were willing to part with \$206,000; for "eternal youth," they were willing to pay \$259,000; and for "talent," slightly higher, at \$285,000.

"Great intellect" and "true love" were priced over \$400,000. "Intelligence" was worth \$407,000, and "true love" \$487,000.

The fondest and most expensive wish on rich folks' lists is "a place in heaven," which was worth \$640,000 to them- more than eleven times the worth of "being president," more than eight times that of "great beauty," and more than twice the sum for "eternal youth" or "talent."

Actually, the respondents were wrong about the worth of heaven. Because heaven is worth much, much more than \$640,000. Money cannot buy "a place in heaven."

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 testified of how their lives have been transformed through that power.

The cost to obtain the treasure

This story shows men who gladly sell everything they have to pay for the treasures. By this story, 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 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, and it is by God's grace we gain the treasures.

Then what does it mean to pay the cost for the heavenly treasures? 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 a while, you already know that. You know what it means to struggle, suffer, and sacrifice in your walk with Christ.

However, with these stories, Jesus is not only teaching us sacrifice, but also the willingness of sacrifice.

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

Among treasures, pearls were regarded as one of the best treasures in ancient time. They were so expensive that only very rich people could afford to purchase them. Pearls were obtained from oysters on the bottom of the Ocean. To find pearls, people had to dive into the ocean, risking their lives. Such pearls were worthy to be obtained at all costs.

Because of the enormous value, the people who found the treasures or pearls joyfully sacrificed everything. They didn't complain about the sacrifice they had to make. In fact, they didn't even consider it to be a sacrifice. Because when they compare the cost they would pay with the value of the treasures they would gain, the cost was nothing. The joy in obtaining the treasures was far greater than the pain they got through paying the cost. So, they were willing to pay the cost.

Paul testified this truth in Philippians 3:8-9, *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...Did Paul make sacrifices to follow Christ? Certainly he did, but he did so with joy knowing what he gained.

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 will 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 that 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 for 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 (Mark 10:29-30).

Think about the unfathomable treasures in Christ. Be willing to pay the cost for the treasures. Then the Lord will give you the heavenly treasures that surpass all treasures in this world.