

Title: The Treasure of the Kingdom
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Text: Matthew 13:44-46
Curtis Froisland

The Treasure of the Kingdom

I. Introduction: Hidden Treasures

Teens found treasure in Israel at an archaeological site from approximately 900AD.¹

We know that in the ancient world, people really did bury their wealth in fields as a way of securing them in times of war or upheaval. The Rabbis in the centuries after Jesus had several discussions concerning the ethical implications of finding a treasure in a field.

For Jesus's listeners, the prospect of finding a treasure was a real, though obviously remote, possibility. Perhaps it was like "If I hit the Lotto," or "If I inherited a million dollars" for us. Jesus recasts this familiar situation, and tells the people the parables of the treasure in the field and of the pearl of great value to illustrate the proper response to the Kingdom of Heaven, to teach them and us that:

Proposition:

***The Kingdom of Heaven is of such great value
it is worth giving up everything.***

Which of course provokes us to wonder about our own response to the Kingdom, are we like the man and the merchant forsaking all to take hold of treasure we have found?

First, we need to remember what the Kingdom of Heaven is. Because I spent a fair amount of time on this last week, I will only restate and summarize what I said there.

I. The Kingdom of Heaven is the reality of God's people living in God's place under God's rule and blessing, which comes into the world through suffering love.

When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven, he is not talking about going to heaven when you die, but how through Him (Jesus), God's plan to reunite Heaven and Earth is coming to pass. As Heaven and earth were united in the Garden, and lost in the Fall, so the great hope of God's people is the consummation at the end of the age (Revelation 21-22).

Matthew uses "Kingdom of Heaven" rather than "Kingdom of God" (as do the other NT writers) to contrast the "otherworldly" & "upside-down" nature of God's Kingdom in contrast the present earthly realm.

A. Examples from Matthew's use of "Heaven and earth" for contrast

In the Lord's prayer Jesus prays that God's will would be done "on earth as it is in heaven."

¹ Marc Santora, "1,100-Year-Old Treasure Is Unearthed by Teenagers in Israel," available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/24/world/middleeast/israel-gold-coins-archaeology.html> Accessed October 29, 2020.

In Matthew 23:9 he says we should call no man on earth “father” because we have one Father, who is in heaven. And in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) where Jesus calls his disciples to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth, he says he has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth.”

B. The unexpected nature of this kingdom²

Last week we saw from the **The Beatitudes, The Parables, how he teaches his disciples to live, and examples from Jesus’ Life and Ministry** that He is bringing his kingdom into the world in an unexpected way—not through worldly power but serving love, and inviting in the most unexpected people—not the worthy, but the least and the lost.

This Kingdom is a kingdom won by the suffering love of Christ: As King of the universe – he enters Jerusalem not on a warhorse or golden chariot but riding humbly on the foal of a donkey. **As king of all** he is enthroned on a cross.

Illustration:

To the world this all looks foolish and weak, but Jesus tells us this is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. It’s in weakness and humility, where the power and blessing of God are found. John Calvin wrote:

For then do we make room for Christ’s grace, when in true humility of mind, we feel and confess our own weakness. The valleys are watered with rain to make them fruitful, while in the mean time, the high summits of the lofty mountains remain dry. Let that man, therefore, become a valley, who is desirous to receive the heavenly rain of God’s spiritual grace.³

II. It’s *this Kingdom* that is so supremely valuable it is worth giving up everything.

On one level the actions of the man and the merchant make perfect sense. In v. 44, the man sells all he has to buy the field which holds the treasure. In v. 46, the merchant sells all he has to buy the pearl of great value.

Illustration:

You can probably relate to that. When you are looking to buy a house, or a specific car, or want to go to a specific college, you might make sacrifices of time, or sell something valuable in order to get the other thing that is more valuable to you.

My kids are all the time coming up with schemes to sell some old toy or Lego set so

² See Jonathan T. Pennington, “The Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew,” SBTJ, February 2010, 48 available at http://equip.sbts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/sbjt_121_pennington.pdf

³ John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians*, commentary on 2 Cor 4.

they can buy the new thing they want more. We all get that I think.

But what's strange is

A. The Kingdom of Heaven challenges our sense of what's important, powerful, worth sacrificing for.

It only makes sense to sell everything like the man or the merchant, if the kingdom of Heaven is really of such great value—but because this Kingdom is from Heaven and not earth, you can't see its value with earthly eyes. Perhaps Jesus implies the strangeness in the behavior of the merchant in v. 46—imagine a merchant selling everything they own to buy one pearl. I'm sure his family, his friends, other merchants would think he's absolutely crazy.

You would only make this move, if you've found as one scholar put it a "wealth that demonetizes all other currencies."⁴

So what is the value of the kingdom?

B. It is worth giving up everything, because only the Kingdom of Heaven brings the restoration & peace we long for.

Everyone wants to live in a place where there is peace and justice, where they feel secure and have all they need. But the typical ways we seek to accomplish those goals won't get us where we want to go.

*1. Worldly power (politics, wealth, violence, etc.) and religion (try harder, do more good, believe in yourself, etc.), promise that through human effort we will achieve peace and prosperity. The kingdom of Heaven tells us that the **suffering love of Jesus is the only truly transformative force in the universe. It is through the cross, and through cross-shaped lives of disciples, that the kingdom of God's peace and justice comes into the world.***

This is good news to people who so often find themselves on the wrong end of earthly power. To those who feel like they have nothing to contribute, or whom the world views as unimportant or unfashionable.

The message of the Kingdom of Heaven shows the futility of worldly kingdoms and modes of power. Violence inevitably begets more violence. Believing that wealth is the path to real security leads to insatiable greed. Grasping after political power leads to inevitable compromise of Kingdom values. Self reliance leads to self-righteousness or self-loathing.

⁴ A.M. Hunter, *The Parables, Then and Now*, (1971), p. 79 in R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 233.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31:

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

2. The Gospel

The message of the Kingdom is the message of the Gospel. Salvation—peace with God and restoration of your broken soul is not based on power we exert or goals we achieve, but purely based on the finished cross-work of King Jesus. Whatever fear, or trauma, or brokenness lives inside of you, can only be healed by receiving the sacrificial love of Jesus.

We put our faith in him—we trust him—and he restores and empowers us through his Spirit to live as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven even as we wait for the arrival of his Kingdom in it's fullness.

The Kingdom of Heaven is worth giving up everything, because only his kingdom brings the restoration & peace we long for.

C. The Kingdom of Heaven is worth giving up everything, because the Kingdom gives us joy in God's presence.

Put simply, we can live as a citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, with it's un-natural, upside-down values because **we get God. He is our treasure.**

To simply try harder is to fall back into earthly patterns, to live out the Kingdom requires clear vision of the King. Jesus Christ is the creator God—all good, all knowing, all wise—come in the flesh not to judge but to deal with our sin and brokenness—to conquer our sin with his love. To reconcile us to himself.

The Bible is full of descriptions of God's good gifts, and God's goodness in himself. Like Psalm 36:7-9:

*⁷ How **precious** is your **steadfast love**, O God!*

*The children of mankind take **refuge** in the shadow of your wings.*

*⁸ They feast on the **abundance** of your house,
and you give them **drink** from the river of your **delights**.*

*⁹ For with you is the **fountain of life**;
in your **light** do we see **light**.*

The book of James tells us (1:17):

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

God is the highest good in the entire universe, from whom all other goods ultimately derive—this God gives himself to you now through the ministry of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit. In John 14, Jesus actually says the Father and Son through the Spirit make their home in those who love and follow Jesus.

And, in the end, when God’s Kingdom comes, the joyful end and goal of all of God’s work in history is this (Rev. 21:3):

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

We live as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, because our King is our great treasure. When we face temptation we remember pleasure forevermore in his presence, when we arrogantly seek or trust in earthly power—we must count it all loss for the sake of knowing Christ. When we serve and sacrifice, we think of God our great reward.

IV. Conclusion

Jesus went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, that in him heaven was breaking into the earth here and now. And he invited all people to come into his Kingdom, to find forgiveness, hope, and the only true and lasting joy.

One way Jesus said it was this:

Matthew 16:24-28

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus calls us even now into his Kingdom. But paradoxically the way to glory is through suffering, and the way to life is through death. We have to die to self, to worldly ways of living, to any claim we have to being worthy, or any wound we use to keep God at arm’s length.

Why? Because you can’t bring earthly kingdom stuff with you into Jesus’s kingdom, and only Jesus can give us the “life”—in the fullest sense of the word: eternal peace, justice, joy.

Christian history is full of people who lived amazing lives of sacrificial love, Apostles, missionaries, and martyrs. Not one of them got there by seeking to be great, but by walking in the way of humility and weakness, taking up their cross daily.

Illustration:

In her book *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, Tish Warren tells how throughout most of her early adult life she wanted to “change the world.” She wanted to champion justice for the least, and she was driven by a vision of God’s “shalom”—the word the OT often uses to describe the wholeness of the kingdom. She worked among the homeless, lived in a Christian commune, and wanted to go overseas to serve the “poorest of the poor.”

But now she is married, and a mom, and she needs to be reminded that her family and her ordinary day matter to God’s mission of bringing his peace into the world. She writes:

“We can become far too comfortable with the American status quo, and we need prophetic voices that challenges us to follow our radical comfort-afflicting Redeemer. But we must also learn to follow Jesus in this workaday world of raising kids, caring for our neighbors, budgeting, doing laundry, and living our days responsibly with stability, generosity, and faithfulness.”

So what will you give up to gain Christ and his kingdom?

- Maybe you’ll give up the dream of retirement to live on mission.
- Maybe you’ll give up your desire to live in a certain city or have a certain salary and instead plan your life around serving and connecting to the local church.
- Maybe you will learn to live simply so you can be generous for the sake of the Kingdom.
- Maybe you’ll give up your career to lay down your life in sacrificial love for your family.

Whatever it is **The Kingdom of Heaven is worth giving up everything**, because only in the Kingdom can we receive the restoration and peace we long for. Only in the Kingdom will we receive God our treasure.