

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Fine Pearl

Introduction

A Northern California couple were out walking their dog one day a few years ago when they saw the corner of a rusted can sticking out of the ground under the shadow of an old tree. Curious they dug it out, only to discover it was full of gold coins. They returned to the spot and dug up several more cans full of gold coins. The coins were minted between 1866 and 1894 and have a face value of \$27,000 but today are estimated to be worth 11 million dollars. The best theory is that a wealthy individual buried the coins rather than trust them to a bank.

This true story reminds us of the first of two parables Jesus tells about the immense value of the kingdom of heaven. A man is walking in a field, much like this couple was walking, when he stumbles on a treasure that had long been hidden in that field. In those days it was fairly common to guard one's riches by burying it in a place where it could be retrieved later. Chances are the person who hid the treasure there has passed away and the land has been handed down or sold off.

This man knows the worth of his find, but he doesn't own the field so he covers it back up and then "in his joy" sells everything he has and buys the field, making the treasure legitimately his. We know the treasure didn't belong to the person who owned the field when he found it, because if it did, he wouldn't have sold the land with the treasure still in it.

In the second parable a merchant is looking for fine pearls and comes across a pearl of great value. He also sells everything he owns to buy that pearl.

Jesus uses parables to reveal secrets of the kingdom of heaven, and these two parables reveal truths that are important for us to consider this morning.

1. The Priceless Worth of the Kingdom of Heaven

In each of these parables something is found that is worth more than literally everything else the finder has. He "sold all he had". And he did it "in his joy". The treasure he found, the pearl he found, eclipsed the value of everything he owned.

What could be worth more than anything and everything else in life? The answer is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of God. The Bible tells us that the kingdom of God is a real kingdom, an eternal kingdom, far above all things, and over all things in heaven and earth.

But for a brief time, this world system has been hijacked from God's rule and lies under the dark dominion of the devil. 1 John 5:19 says the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

When Jesus came, it was God's kingdom invading Satan's kingdom. Jesus' first message was "the kingdom of heaven is among you" and it was, in the Person of Jesus. When he healed the paralytic and the lame and the blind and the woman suffering a bleeding disorder and raised a child from the dead, it was the kingdom of God invading the kingdom of Satan and setting their victims free. When Jesus forgave the prostitute, and called the tax collector, and welcomed the outcast, it was the kingdom of heaven invading the kingdom of Satan by redeeming lives that Satan and sin were destroying.

Jesus came to invade the kingdom of hell and claim us as his own. It's why he came, and died, and rose again. God was claiming us, and qualifying us, for heaven.

Col. 1:12- says we should give *thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.* ¹³ *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

The only way we can enter the kingdom of heaven is by believing in the King of heaven, Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us that we might be forgiven. If you have never believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, there is only one way into heaven and that's through faith in Jesus Christ. He is the priceless treasure who is worth more than anything, and everything, in the world.

Life is a treasure hunt

You know, I think these parables sum up our lives in an incredibly brief, but incredibly profound way. Life is kinda like a treasure hunt, in the sense that we are always seeking something which will add value to our lives. I don't mean that in a bad way. No one wants nothing to come of their life, no one wants nothing in their life – we all want there to be value in our lives, we all want our lives to mean something. In a sense we are all looking for treasure that will have value and add value to our lives:

- Friends
- Good education
- Job we enjoy (and make good money at)
- Marriage
- Children
- Own a home
- Good reputation

Joy comes in when we get a treasure that we believe will add value to our life.

Fear comes in when we think we're going to lose a treasure that we believe essential to the value of our life: whether it be losing a job, a friend, our marriage, our reputation.

Despair and depression comes in (and I know there are other reasons for depression, including physiological reasons), when we become convinced that we missed our opportunity to ever get that treasure or that there is no such treasure that can add value to our lives.

God fills our lives with treasures that really are priceless. Our families, our friends, the memories we make with loved ones, meaningful conversations, walking through hard times together, fighting for something important and prevailing, successes, even failures that help us learn and grow as individuals.

Notice that material things don't really make the list of priceless treasures. The Lord enabled Janice and I to buy a beautiful home in Painted Post. When we moved here, the area had just had a lot of lay-offs and home prices were rock-bottom. One day we will sell the home and downsize. But there is something precious to me about our home – and it's not the wood and sheetrock. It's the memories we have there, raising our kids. There is laughter in the walls. There are other things in the walls too – some crying, arguing, silliness. But it's all priceless. That will be what's hard. But things are never by themselves priceless.

But all these treasures, as precious as they are, are an echo of a deeper longing in our hearts. They add meaning to our lives but we always have a sense that there's something more, something we're missing. That can lead some people to feel despair cause they think that means nothing in life can be the treasure that fills the emptiness within.

Jesus points us to the treasure that is worth more than any other treasure and every other treasure put together. The kingdom of heaven is a treasure more valuable than anything else. If you gained the whole world but failed to enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says you have profited nothing. Life will be crushingly empty. If we have everything else, but don't have the kingdom of heaven, we have nothing. If we have nothing else, but have the kingdom of heaven, we have everything.

The eternal kingdom of heaven, with its brilliant glory, its perfect love, complete forgiveness, exuberant joy, an eternity of productive work, and everlasting-ness is the treasure that we are all longing for that adds the deepest meaning to life, no matter what other treasures we do or don't get in life.

These parables speak of the priceless value of the kingdom of heaven, and that kingdom is ours through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

A second thing we see in these parables is that...

2. People come to the kingdom in different ways

In the first parable, the man stumbles onto the kingdom quite by accident. He's not looking, he's not seeking, and suddenly, there it is. Like the couple in California walking their dog. Little did they know their lives were going to be forever changed by that walk. That's what happened to this man. He found the kingdom when he wasn't looking for the kingdom.

In the Bible, that's the Apostle Paul. He was just working his day job killing Christians, quite satisfied with his religion and righteousness when he stumbled onto the kingdom of heaven and Jesus knocked him off his horse. The Samaritan woman wasn't looking, she was just getting water from the well when she stumbled onto the kingdom of heaven when Jesus asked her for a cup of water.

In the second parable, the man is actively seeking the treasure when he finds it. How many pearls did he pass up before he found that one fine pearl that was worth more than all the others? That's blind Bartimaeus who calls Jesus' name, calling him to come and heal him. It's the Ethiopian who's diligently searching in God's word. It's the Bereans who studied God's word to confirm what was biblical and what wasn't.

This is important just because we shouldn't compare how we found Christ to someone else's experience as if there's only one right way to come to Christ. In both cases, it's God who draws us, whether it's putting us in the right place at the right time, or it's putting a desire to seek the truth in our hearts.

The last point is super important, but can also confuse us.

3. The kingdom of heaven is the free gift of God...and it costs us everything

In both cases the finder sells all he has to buy the field that contains the treasure, and the pearl. That could lead us to think that we need to purchase our way into the kingdom of heaven.

Heaven is the free gift of God

The Bible is clear on this: salvation is the gift of God, not something we earn. Luke 12:32 *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Romans 6:23 gives us this good news: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

On the cross Jesus paid the full price to save us. He said "it is finished" – meaning our debt was 100% paid off. If we even try to add to Christ's finished work we empty the cross of its power. Our entrance into

the kingdom of heaven is totally the work of Jesus and the free gift of God. It's the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, not sell us the kingdom.

How the kingdom costs us everything

So in what way does the kingdom of heaven cost us everything? Remember the man "in his joy" sold everything he had for that treasure. He found a treasure so valuable that it was a joy to give up what little he had in order to gain that treasure. Paul says in Phil. 3 that all he once held dear he now counts as dung compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. In his joy he traded in self-righteousness, pride of heritage, and social status for the greater treasure of knowing Christ. He traded in obeying the law to gain righteousness (which wasn't working) for the greater trusting Christ for his righteousness. He traded in the status of his family lineage for the greater treasure of calling God his Father, and Jesus his brother. He traded in the respect of his religious peers for the reproaches of Christ – and he considered himself far richer for it.

We can't go in two directions

I find a helpful picture of how the kingdom can be free and cost us everything in Jesus' exhortation found in Matt. 6:31-33 *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Jesus is talking about two different directions here: what the Gentiles seek and what the Christ follower is to seek. Gentiles seek food, drink, and clothing. In other words, they live their lives in the direction of worldly gain. The Christ follower is to seek first (priority) the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Volunteer – we can walk in one direction/other direction/both directions at once. Can't do it. When you choose one direction you say no to the other direction. We could say that when you go in that direction it "costs" you that other direction. Cause you can't do both.

The kingdom of heaven calls us in the direction of love, and it costs us the direction of hate. It calls us in the direction of compassion, and costs us the direction of indifference. It calls us in the direction of forgiveness and costs us the direction of bitterness. It calls us in the direction of sacrifice, and costs us the direction of selfishness. It calls us in the direction of humility, costing us pride. Generosity, costing us greed. Joy, costing us wallowing in self-pity.

Dying to ourselves means dying to the world's direction as we seek the kingdom of God first.

When it comes to the ordinary needs, pleasures, and comforts of this life, seeking the kingdom first doesn't mean we don't do those things or need those things, it means they follow us rather than our following them. As we seek the kingdom first, they are added to our lives.

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and lift our eyes to see the priceless value of the kingdom of heaven and fill our longing with that glorious vision. It's the treasure that makes all the rest of life worth living.

The Lord's love is better than life – Ps. 63:3

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere – Ps. 84:10

The Parables of Jesus
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You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Ps. 16:11

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— Phil 3:7-9

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Romans 8:18