

The Field Worth Everything

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Treasure Hunting

As a kid I thought a lot about what I would like to become someday when I grew up, One of the things, and I thought it would be absolutely fantastic, was to become a deep sea treasure hunter. I probably saw something on TV that piqued my interest in the field. It seemed adventurous, daring, exotic. And “easy” money. You know if you stop to think about it, what would you think, what emotions would course through your being if you stumbled upon a priceless trove of long forgotten treasurers? It is a fantastic fantasy, and I had it as a kid, until I made an attempt at scuba diving and discovered that my sinus issues made it too difficult to dive deep because of the intense pressures that built up in my sinus cavities all over my head. I couldn't get any deeper than 20 ft and try as I might to clear the Eustachian tubes, the pain would become excruciating. So much for deep sea diving and my childhood dream.

A New Treasure

But then as a teenager I discovered another adventure a greater adventure that wouldn't be hampered by my sinuses. I wouldn't have to give up treasure hunting either. I just had to change the treasure I was looking for. I am referring of course to a story Jesus once told, a parable where the different symbols of the story reveal something about what God had in store for each of us as we seek for treasure.

Matthew 13:44 - The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Now when you read Jesus' parables you need to pay very specific attention to all the elements in the parable. Each symbol means something, and Jesus is very intentional about every part.

What is the parable really about? What is The Kingdom of Heaven is like...? A treasure. How valuable is the kingdom of heaven? In this parable, where is the treasure? In a field, and it is hidden from view. And Jesus says a man finds the treasure. Who is the man? A person. Anybody. Which is more valuable, the treasure, or the field?

So the kingdom of heaven in this parable is likened to a treasure. Since the treasure is hidden in the field it isn't at first noticeable. It is hidden out of view. And the man kind of stumbles upon it. But when he stumbles upon it, he discovers he has found something very, very valuable. More valuable than everything he has. In fact he doesn't have enough to purchase this treasure from the land owner, so what does he do? He hides it again in the field, goes and sells everything he has, takes the money and puts an offer on the property. It's a real estate deal. And here's the point. The kingdom of heaven is too valuable to purchase. He doesn't purchase the treasure, which he cannot afford. He purchases the field, which he can and does afford.

My new brothers and sisters in Christ, I have a question for you. If the kingdom of heaven is the treasure, what is the field? What does it mean the kingdom of heaven was hidden in a field?

Please take a moment and answer this question for me. What is the field?

Take a look at Luke 17:21 - *The Kingdom of God is _____ you. Within you? In your midst?*

1. If the kingdom of God is **within you...** like it says in the KJV, NKJV, the New Century Version.

All you have to do to find heaven is to look within. Follow your heart, know your thoughts. Let these guide you. Do you see any problems with that? Does not the Bible teach us that our hearts are deceitfully wicked, and who can know them? In your very own experience, have you not witnessed your heart your own thoughts misguiding you?

If the whole kingdom is within who needs church? Or the Bible? I've got everything right here. Who needs anything or anybody else? Do you see any problems with the interpretation that the kingdom of heaven is within you? Now I am not going to say this morning that this translation is wrong. But it is enough to say there are some challenges with it.

2. Alternative rendering (in the margin), or in other versions of the Bible (Like the NASB, NIV, NLT) - the kingdom of God is **in your midst, or among you..**

If the kingdom of heaven is "among you", or "in your [plural] midst", What does that mean? If you look around you, if you get to know the people in your environment, as you acquaint yourself with people who are different from you, who don't believe like you, people of other cultures, or whatever, you discover something about the kingdom of God. It was there,

dare I say "hidden" all along. God was there, already at work already finding ways to connect with these people in ways you were not aware of. It was hidden from you, hidden from most.

The field = the earth = the people of this planet.

In this parable the man who finds the treasure of the kingdom of heaven, goes and purchases the land that hides or contains the kingdom. He makes a sacrifice, he sells everything he has, not to buy the treasure, which he could never afford, but to buy the field that contains it, which he could afford. He makes a sacrifice, a great sacrifice, to purchase or redeem the field.

Doctoral Class Controversy

I flew here on Thursday from Toronto Canada, where I had been taking my third of four intensive courses for my Doctoral program. And ooh did I create a stir among my fellow classmates when I suggested that the salvation of others depends in part on our sharing the gospel with them! That there could be people lost to the kingdom of heaven forever because we did not do enough to give the gospel of their salvation to them. It was the angriest I have ever seen my classmates in the three years we have been together. They shouted, banged the table, "No!" they yelled. Not one member of my cohort agreed with me. "Jesus' sacrifice was all sufficient." they said. "We cannot add anything or take anything away from His all sufficient sacrifice." they insisted. "Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves", they demanded. And of course I agreed with them...all of them. But then I asked them, "What does Romans 10:13-15 mean when it says,

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?

And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

It is true, whoever calls upon God will be saved. Jesus Saves! And this opportunity is open to whomever... anyone, anybody and everybody. Jesus saves all! You, me, all of us. This is all very true. But then Paul throws a monkey wrench into that formula by asking a series of rhetorical ?s.

“How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”

Do you get his point? It is true Jesus saves everyone who calls upon him. It is what He does, and He’s very good at what He does. But how can people call on Jesus if they don’t know anything about him? And how will they learn anything about Him unless someone teaches them? So we have a role to play in the salvation of others.

Borrowing the language of our parable we have sacrifices to make in order to redeem the field. Anyone who is not willing to sacrifice all that they have in order to save the lost people of this planet, are like the unnamed and unmentioned masses of people in Jesus parable of the hidden treasure who went about their daily business completely unaware that in their midst, buried and hidden from their view, there was a priceless treasure hiding in a nearly nearly-worthless plot of land, A treasure in earthen vessels, that they could have had all along, if they had discovered it and “sacrificed” like this man.

And come on, lets get real, was it really a sacrifice? Did the man lose anything really? No he gained everything. He sold everything he had...but he gained so much more in the process.

I believe it was William Blake who said, “I sought my soul, But my soul I could not see. I sought my God, But my God eluded me. I sought my brother, And I found all three.”

Misunderstanding about the Parable

Some have understood the hidden treasure parable very differently. They have thought that if they want to have heaven they have to make great sacrifices to obtain it. Salvation for them is a transaction that they can obtain when they have sacrificed enough for it. Now it is right to say that the kingdom of heaven is worth everything we have, but it would not be accurate to say that we have enough to purchase heaven. Jesus doesn’t teach we are to purchase the treasure. We are to purchase the field.

We cannot purchase heaven. Heaven is a gift to us. We receive heaven when we discover Jesus as our savior. He saved us to dwell with Him. But there is something of the *kingdom* of heaven we *are* to purchase...there is something Jesus is telling us that we must sacrifice everything for and obtain, the field. The kingdom you see, is more than the King...it is more than the palace He dwells in and has prepared for us. The kingdom is also the people of His realm. And I believe it is this third element of the kingdom what we are to purchase and possess. The kingdom citizens are worth everything we have. They are so valuable, so priceless, that giving everything we have to win them for the kingdom is a bargain.

The Pearl

I believe the field represents the people of this planet. There is a reason I believe this, and it has to do with the next parable Jesus told right after the parable of the Hidden Treasure.

Matthew 13:45, 46 - The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Now at first glance, it may appear Jesus is telling two parables back to back that teach exactly the same truth. Both parables feature something very valuable — hidden treasure, pearl of great price. In both parables someone is giving up everything they have to obtain that valuable thing. Both emphasize value and sacrifice.

The Difference

But there are significant and important differences between these parables as well. In the first parable the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. In the second parable look very carefully at what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. What is it like? A merchant...not the pearl of great price, but a person, a single individual.

Another difference is that in the first parable Jesus tells us the man stumbled upon the treasure. He discovered it, but he wasn't looking for it. In the second parable about the pearl, the merchant went searching for pearls. This was his business. He was more intentional about and actively involved in his search.

Now I have a question for the smarter kids here. Who is the smartest kid here? If you were to summarize the entire kingdom

of heaven into a single individual who gave up everything he had to obtain something he was intentionally looking for, and was very valuable to him, What name might you come up with? Jesus. Okay, you know the story. Jesus didn't stumble upon the pearl, but went seeking for it. He was on the hunt, on the prowl. He was actively and intentionally engaged in His search.

In the second parable what is being emphasized about the kingdom of heaven is not the value of that place to us, or even the citizenry of that place. What is being emphasized is the person who represents the kingdom. The king of that kingdom. He is very special. He is very intentional. He is very sacrificial. He gives up everything he has to obtain what? To obtain the pearl. And this is the other significant difference between these two parables. In this parable, it was not the less valuable land that was purchased in order to obtain the more valuable treasure. In this parable the merchant gave up everything he had, everything he had, to purchase the priceless pearl itself. This very wealthy businessman, Jesus, had enough to buy the pearl.

Now tell me please, if the merchant is Jesus, and His giving up everything he had represents the cost He was willing to pay in order to obtain the valuable pearl, what is the pearl? Us. Every one of us. Heaven's Kingdom value is not so much about the place, or even its citizenry. It is its king who has loved us so much he sacrificed everything he had so we may have it all.

Now I need to say something very quickly about pearls and how they are made. Pearls are very beautiful and precious, there is no question about this. They may not be "your thing", but for centuries their unique qualities and unparalleled beauty have made them the object of regard for many, many people.

The Origin of the Pearl

But pearls have a rather nefarious origin. They start with a grain of sand, and that tiny grain of sand finds its way into the sensitive lining inside an oyster's mouth. It lodges itself in this sensitive tissue, and the poor oyster cannot expel it. It hurts, it irritates, it grinds away at the tissue like sand paper. So what the animal does is it coats the granule with a milky calcium-like substance. And it keeps coating it, and keeps coating it, and that tiny grain of sand gets smoother, but as it gets smoother, it also gets bigger, and bigger, and bigger. It grows in that tiny space inside its shell, until it gets so big and obtrusive and painful that it takes the life of the oyster. Now a harvester of pearls can discover the oyster, and extract the pearl, but in doing so he or she kills the oyster because the pearl has become such a part of the oyster. But whether the animal is harvested or not, that tiny grain of sand causes the death of the oyster, a painful and deadly process that produces pearls.

I do not know how you think of yourself this morning, or how you think about your world. But I would like to say something about Jesus. Because whether you think of yourself or others as irritating grains of sand, that deserve to be spit out and discarded, or you think of yourself like Jesus does—not what you are, but what you can become through His oyster-like sacrifice—precious, smooth, beautiful, worth everything He has to obtain the priceless gem, no one, and I mean no one is outside of Jesus' plan to save, to transform, to redeem. No one.

We are so valuable to Him...so valuable to Him that even though we were an irritating and worthless grain of sand, He sees us as a pearl of great price, nothing is worth more to Him than obtaining that pearl we can become through Him. He gave it all, He sacrificed all he had and his very life to seal the deal.

When I was an unbeliever, and I realized what Jesus did for me, and for every other irritating worthless person on this planet (that's how I thought of you all), when that dawned on me what Jesus did to prove our worth to Him, it changed me. It made me want to be like Him. I wanted to think like Him. I wanted to see myself and others like He did and does. And it helped me to understand the parable of the hidden treasure in a whole new light.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a nearly worthless plot of land. But that land finds its real value, not in what it is, or where it is located, but by what it contains, a treasure...Jesus...heaven's jewel. And that thought, of Jesus in our midst, of Jesus among us, all around us working for the salvation and enrichment of others, all of us, that thought is so valuable it is worth sacrificing everything we have to make sure that others know about it. To know their worth in Jesus' eyes, who gave all so we may have all.

We may all have had a different reason for coming to church today. I came this morning to share Jesus. He is my treasure. And I hope he will become yours. And I pray that you, whether you stumbled upon this truth or sought it out intentionally this morning, you will come to believe He is working in your life and in the lives and others around you, and when you discover that, you will do like the man in our parable, give up everything, everything you have and are, to ensure that treasure is yours, and that treasure is everyone else's you should meet. May God richly bless you as you do.