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Series: Parables in Matthew 13

Sermon: 4 of 5

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HIDDEN TREASURE & PEARL

We are continuing a series of different parables Jesus shared as recorded in Matthew 13. We know that Jesus is a gifted teacher and a great storyteller. Jesus shared parables to give a comparison or an illustration. When Jesus shared parables, He often used everyday things like seeds, yeast, pearl, net and weeds to compare and illustrate simple truths or lessons for us. In six out of seven parables in Matthew 13, Jesus introduces His parables by saying, *"The kingdom of heaven is like..."* He is giving us a comparison or illustration statement of what the kingdom of heaven is like.

In the first sermon, we saw and learned from one of Jesus' parables – the parable of the sower. You may remember what happened to the different seeds. And we were challenged to be more like the seed that fell on good soil. We should be rooted in the Word of God and growing in our faith in Him.

In the second sermon, we learned from the parable of the weeds. We are either "weeds" or "wheat." We either belong to Jesus or we belong to the devil. Jesus, the Son of Man, will judge us at the end of the age. Those who follow Jesus will have eternal life with Him in heaven. Those who follow the devil will have punishment in hell, where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" forever. I hope you are a follower of Jesus! Heaven sure is a lot better than hell!

In the third sermon, we learned from two different parables – the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast. We learned the kingdom of God, just as Jesus declared, is growing (expanding) throughout the whole world. The kingdom of God grows through us. God's kingdom grows in our hearts as we read God's Word and through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, in this fourth sermon, we will learn from two more parables – the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl. Both of these parables are only found in the book of Matthew. They are not recorded in any other Gospel. Jesus tells these parables to His disciples in a house in Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It's kind of a small group study where the disciples learn more about God's kingdom.

In both of these parables, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven. In the first one, Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. In the second one, Jesus says

the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.

Here are both parables recorded in Matthew 13:44-46 in the ASL Bible:

"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.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

These are both interesting parables. You may remember in previous sermons I told you that Jesus most often did not explain His parables. He wanted His listeners to make their own applications. Jesus did not explain the two parables we have just seen from the ASL Bible. So, let's attempt to understand what Jesus is teaching and make applications to our own lives.

Why did Jesus talk about treasures hidden in a field and a merchant looking for fine pearls? First of all, let's focus on treasures hidden in a field. In ancient times, it was common to hide treasure in the ground since there were no banks, although there were bankers (Matthew 25:27). The same thing happens today in the Middle East. The banks and the government cannot be trusted. So people hide their money.

What Jesus is saying was very real to these people. Many of the people listening to Jesus' parables probably had money hidden someplace. Peasants dreamed of stumbling across one of the hidden treasures.

What an incredible thing for this man to run across someone else's hidden treasure. What joy! Perhaps the person who buried it was gone or dead. Or maybe the owner of the field did not know the treasure was there.

Legally, to have the right to that treasure, all one would have to do is buy the field. So this man who found the treasure decides to bury it again. He gathers and sells whatever he has. Everything he has is worthless compared to the value of owning the treasure. He uses the money to buy the field. The money he has is a fraction of the value of the treasure. Now that he has the treasure, he lives happily ever after!

How does this apply to us? The man in the parable represents us. What is the "treasure" we should seek? The kingdom of God. We should seek Him. We should seek His love. We should seek His forgiveness. We are compelled to put Christ first in our lives. When we do this, our values and priorities get rearranged. We make sacrifices of worldly things. Paul writes in Philippians 3:7, 8, *"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."*

The point here is the unsurpassed (tremendous) value of the kingdom. God offers us

eternal life through Jesus Christ. It is important to give everything and surrender our lives to live for Him.

Let's go on to the second parable. Why did Jesus talk about a merchant looking for fine pearls? This is kind of a strange comparison. The Hebrews (Jews) never really valued pearls. If you look through the Old Testament, there are a lot of jewels and gems mentioned, such as diamonds and rubies. But pearls were not mentioned.

So why did Jesus talk about pearls? Well, the Gentiles loved them. Gentile traders would come to Galilee looking for valuable pearls and pay huge sums of money for these pearls. These people were "merchants" coming to town looking for pearls. And they were willing to pay huge sums for these pearls!

In this parable, the merchant found a pearl of great value. He sold everything he had. He used the money from the sales to buy the pearl of great value.

How does this apply to us? Jesus challenges us to be like the merchant looking for a pearl of great value. We should seek Him. We should give everything and surrender our lives to be a part of His kingdom. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, *"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* Seek first His kingdom. Seek His righteousness. He will give us what we need.

This is not always easy. It is challenging sometimes. I have an analogy for you. How does a pearl get formed? The pearl is the only jewel that's produced by living matter. A little particle of sand or some other irritating thing gets inside the shell of the oyster. It's kind of like having a rock in your shoe that irritates you. When it irritates you, what do you do? You take the rock out of your shoe and you feel better. When a little particle of sand gets into the oyster, there is pain and agony and suffering. There is no way for the oyster to get this thing out. So it transforms the particle of sand into a pearl, a thing of great beauty and value. Isn't that amazing? A little particle of sand being transformed into a valuable pearl.

This is the same for us. As Christians, we have challenges and trials in our lives. It is not always easy to seek Jesus first. It is not always easy to surrender our lives completely to Jesus. But, persevere and press on. Continue to seek God and His righteousness. Do not give up. Allow God to transform you. Allow God to take the "particles of sand" in your lives and make them beautiful according to His purpose. Romans 5:3-4 says, *"We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."*

Really, both of these parables teach the same truth. The kingdom of God is of such great value that one should be willing to give up all he has in order to gain it. Jesus gave (surrendered) His life for us. He died on a cross for your sins and my sins. This should compel us to want to put Jesus first in our lives. Compel us to seek Him first. Compel us to desire Jesus more than anything in this world.

What is keeping you from making Jesus first in your life? What are you hanging on to? Is that really of greater value than what Jesus offers you? Surrender your life to Him and put Jesus first in your life.



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