

Jesus' Greatest Hits

The Hidden Treasure & The Priceless Pearl

Part 20 - November 25, 2007

[VIDEO: HOLE IN THE GROUND]

If you knew about a fortune in treasure, in the backyard of a house that was for sale, wouldn't you buy that house as quick as you could? Would you bother to haggle over the price? I know I wouldn't!

In the parables of "The Hidden Treasure" and "The Priceless Pearl", Jesus makes it clear that surrendering everything to gain His Kingdom is a great trade!

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. - *Matthew 13:44-46 NIV*



Burying valuables was quite common in Jesus' day. Banks were uncommon and unsafe; and houses - which were made of mud and stone - offered almost no protection against thieves or invaders.



In the parable of The Talents, how did the "one-talent" servant protect his Master's money? He buried it in the ground.

This was especially true in Israel. Because of the frequent warfare and looting there, generation after generation had kept their valuables in the ground for safekeeping.



If a *burrier* is taken captive, is driven from the land, or dies, those coins and jewels are lost. By the time Jesus told this parable, Israel was a *treasure trove* of buried fortunes. Everybody knew somebody who had hit pay dirt in the field!

Q: But, what does the "treasure" represent in Jesus' parable?

A: The "Kingdom of Heaven".

Both parables begin with: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like"

Q: So, what exactly is the "Kingdom of Heaven"?

This is interesting: Matthew labels it the, “Kingdom of *Heaven*”; while the other gospels refer to it as the, “Kingdom of *God*”. They mean the same thing; so, can you guess why they did that?

Matthew wrote to his fellow Jews; and they are hesitant to use God’s divine name (less they inadvertently take it in vain). So, they substitute the words “Heaven” or “Blessed” for “God”. Also, the Jewish people were expecting and anticipating the Messiah to establish a *physical* earthly kingdom. The expression, “Kingdom of *Heaven*” emphasizes that it’s a *spiritual* kingdom.



The Kingdom isn’t a realm – it’s a reign. It’s not a location, it’s an influence and an authority.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of **righteousness, peace** and **joy** in the Holy Spirit ... - *Romans 14:17 NIV*



A kingdom reflects the character of its king.

And those who enter into it can only do so by surrendering *everything* to the sovereignty (the dominion, authority, and power), of that King.

And the reigning King in God’s Kingdom, is Christ.

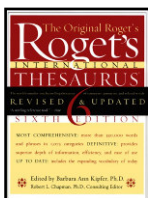
Then the end will come, when [Christ] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. - *1 Corinthians 15:24-26 NIV*

The goal isn’t to enter into a *geographical location* called Heaven; but *eternal fellowship* with the Father through our King. And this requires us to surrender any dominion, authority, or power that prevents that from happening here and now!

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. - *Matthew 6:10 KJV*

When it says “he hid it again”, it doesn’t mean that he was acting *dishonestly*. He would’ve known by the age of the coins if they could be returned to their rightful owner. He was simply *safeguarding* his find.

I have **hidden** your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. - *Psalms 119:11 NIV*



The Greek word used here for *treasure* is: “Thesaurus”. Roget used the term for his *vast treasury* of words. This man didn’t just find a few coins or a small bag of gold; he found a “thesaurus” (a large chest or a hidden door to a vast chamber of treasure)! This is what it is to discover the inexhaustible riches of the Kingdom!

That's why it's "in his joy" that he gave up everything in order to buy that field; not grudgingly, but ecstatically!



What if I ask you to give up \$65,000 for a 2008 Mercedes ... but *then* I explain that you can pay it in *Monopoly money*. You'd probably make that "sacrifice" with a fair amount of joy!

The *real test* (as to whether or not I view Christ as my treasure), may not be the willingness to surrender my authority to His sovereignty, but whether or not I surrender it with *joy*.

Incomparable joy comes from comprehending how much we gain, and how little we're asked to give in comparison.

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?
Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? - *Matthew 16:26 NIV*

Q: How do you begin to compare permission to approach the throne of God and call Him "Father", with ... a new boat?!

Q: How do you appraise the value of redemption, forgiveness, grace, and eternal life in measures of wealth and power?

And so he gave up everything for this "thesaurus" of treasure! Likewise, the merchant gladly gave up all he had for that pearl.



The Romans prized pearls above all other jewels.

It's the only gem that can't be improved by human hands. Gem stones must be cut and refined; but cut or alter a pearl, and it loses its value.

In Revelation, the pearl represents entrance into the kingdom:

The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. - *Revelation 21:21 NIV*

Q: Why do you suppose Jesus told two stories to make one point?

The word "again" ties them together as one teaching. I take it to mean there are two ways to discover the kingdom which reflect two types of people: seekers and stumblers. Those who stumble onto truth *unintentionally*. Those who seek the truth *intentionally*.

The man in the field wasn't looking for treasure. He was occupied with other thoughts and things. He might have been taking a short-cut; or he may have been a hired field hand. He was like Jed Clampett, shootin' at some food!

But the merchant traveled far and wide, earnestly searching for the finest, purest, truest pearl. Always seeking, but never finding the perfection he desired until that fateful day.

So many pearls; so many approaches to God/truth; but then one day, he discovers *it*: the only one to say, "You can't earn it; it's a gift. And a loving Father longs to give it to you." And, for this he gladly gives up his pearl "collection".

Q: Were you earnestly searching for truth when you found it?

Q: Were you preoccupied with other things when it found you?

- Discovering the Kingdom of Heaven happens both those ways.

Q: The real question is, are you willing to trade *everything* in your "power" (i.e. dominion, authority, and control) for it?



The point isn't that salvation is purchased or earned (it's a free gift by God's grace through our faith), but there is a condition: complete devotion. Receiving Christ is free but following Him is costly. That's why He urges His disciples to count the cost. (*Luke 14:28-33*)

Q: Are you willing to trade self-centeredness for submission?

Q: Are you willing to give up the temporary pleasures of sin?

Q: Are you willing to forfeit grudges and love those enemies?

Q: Are you willing to repent and turn from sin when you fail?

True followers count the cost, and consider the reward.

And, Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything He hasn't first modeled: He gave up *everything* (His glory, His honor, and even His life), so that He could purchase *you* and *me*.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. -
2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV

- You are His hidden treasure and His precious pearl.

Let's see how well you've been listening; answer *true* or *false* when I ask the questions. In this passage, we've learned that:

1. The Kingdom of Heaven is a realm, not a reign.
2. We possess a pearl that many are earnestly seeking.
3. We possess a treasure that others may stumble across.
4. Jesus doesn't mind taking second place in your life.