

This Treasure

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[0 : 0 0] this morning. So thanks Craig for coming today. Well it's good to be here again and among friends and certainly in the work in Kinseu we do appreciate the prayers and support and we're coming to that point in January where probably the 17th of January we're looking at constituting which is a Saturday afternoon. That's the plan at this point and the following day then we would start services in Kinseu. That's the launch of services so we will constitute, we will be a Baptist church we pray Lord willing and then actually start services from there. So just to pray with us on that it's kind of the stage where you're sorry to be leaving your church, you're feeling that, it's kind of hurting and yet it's that moment where you're kind of maybe we need to just do it now you know maybe we need to go and get on with it and the

Lord is preparing us for what's ahead in Kinseu and we trust that it will be really good and we're excited about it at the same time. So just to pray for Kim and Amy and Ian and Jan here as they prepare for that move as you are doing. If you have your Bibles please turn to Matthew 13.

Matthew 13. Matthew 13. Matthew 13. Matthew 13. Matthew 13. Matthew 13.

Matthew 13. Matthew 13. Matthew 13. Matthew 13. So in Matthew 13 we're going to read from some of this chapter in a moment but I'll just pray before we do. Please let's bow our heads and commit our time to the Lord. Lord we thank you for your word to us and we thank you for the importance of your word. We just pray Lord that this morning we would hear your voice. We'd hear you as we read. As we listen to the words prepared and we trust guided by you. We pray that you would speak to our hearts and encourage us with what you would have to say to us. Help us to have ears to hear. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

So we're looking at the parables of the treasure and the pearl and that's near the end of that chapter but we're just going to start at verse 10 and we'll read Matthew 13 and verse 10.

[2 : 5 8] The disciples came to him and asked why do you speak to the people in parables? He replied the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them. Whoever has will be given more and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables. Though seeing they do not see, though hearing they do not hear or understand. In them he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah.

You will be ever hearing but never understanding. You will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become callous. They hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth many prophets and righteous men long to see what you see but did not see it and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. And we go down to verse 44.

Right down through the parables to this small section. Verse 44. 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. And we look particularly at that, those two at the end, those two small parables. Matthew 13 as we've been reading is a chapter full of parables and parables all about the kingdom of God. Verses 1-3 said these words, that same day Jesus went out of the house, sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables. It's the parable of the sower, the parable of the weeds, the mustard seed, the net.

And today we talk about the hidden treasure and the pearl. Generally there are about 30 parables in the gospels. There's none in John's gospel. I suppose John communicated differently when you think of the I am's and other ways that he shared what Jesus was teaching. Parables are usually understood as comparisons, illustration, stories Jesus drew from nature and life to illustrate truth. And normally parables have a single meaning and not multiple meanings. I suppose not every element is meant to be that significant in them. We can fall into that trap of trying to find too many meanings in a parable. We can overanalyze and that's a danger. We generally believe that parables though are easy to remember. So they're effective in communicating in that way that we, they're familiar, they're memorable, they're memorable, you could repeat them. And that's true. They did help people understand because they were simple. But ultimately there's a mysterious side to parables which we see about in this chapter. They actually hide the truth from those who don't want it. They have hidden meanings. Meanings that need explaining later to those who want more. These hidden meanings challenged those who were interested to ask more. Like the disciples to pursue answers, to engage with the challenge of it all. What does he mean? If we've got that sort of heart then God can reveal more to us.

But if you don't engage with it. If you brush it off, maybe we miss it. So unless you're a seeker who wants more, then the likelihood is that you won't reach the depths of understanding that even these parables have for us spiritually. Many people simply don't want to know. They listen but they don't hear.

[8 : 05] Jesus talks about this spiritual dullness that seems to be all around in those days. In verses 13 and 14 he says these words, Whoever does not have, even what he has, will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables.

Though seeing, they do not see. Though hearing, they do not hear or understand. The secrets of the kingdom of heaven have a logic all of their own. Human reason isn't enough.

In fact, even when I show interest, even when I seek more, still God has to reveal the truth to me.

The spirit still helps us understand. Even this searching that we may have, it needs to be revealed and explained.

It's not that the parables deliberately want to conceal truth. And that's important to keep people out of the kingdom. But people don't normally have the ability to understand them. It's given to the disciples.

[9 : 21] It's not just about human cleverness. It's not as, have we been to Bible college so then we'd understand. The Lord gives us the understanding we need.

I suppose the disciples accepted Jesus in the beginning when they followed him first. And the understanding followed.

The understanding comes even over time. Even for those of us who are Christians a long time. Understanding comes over time. When it's explained a bit more.

But the most important thing for us to know about parables this morning. Is that there's a divide between those who believe.

And those who don't. And the parables actually reveal that. The parables actually reveal the divide. Between those who see.

[10 : 21] And those who won't see. These very small parables of the treasure. And the pearl. Are set in a context.

And the context of chapter 11 and 12 of Matthew. Is that there is a big division. Becoming clear. Between those who are wanting to know the Lord.

And those who are turning their back. There's a wide variety of responses. And we see that in our day today.

You have to make up your mind about Jesus. You cannot just be somewhere in the middle. Kind of interested. A little bit apathetic.

It's one way or it's the other way. And the call in chapter 11 divides people. I'll just give a couple of examples. Chapter 11. Come to me all you who are weary.

[11 : 23] And burdened. And I will give you rest. The call goes out. Come to me. Will we come to him? And some will.

And some won't. The direct challenge in chapter 12. Pulls no punches. He who is not with me. Is against me. And he who does not gather with me.

Scatters. Hard words. A hard challenge. Will you hear his voice and respond? Will you hear his voice and ignore?

More. The parables do this. In an amazing way. In chapter 13. They amazingly highlight. Those who will hear.

And those who won't. Mixed response. Let's look at the two short parables. Just briefly this morning.

[12 : 22] Verses 44 to 46. 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. The story of the treasure. Found in the field.

The wonderful image. Of a man stumbling on treasure. Kind of. Kind of gets your heart going a little bit. Doesn't that this idea.

That I might one day stumble on treasure. Maybe something would happen. Wow that would be the lottery or something. Stumbling on treasure.

[13 : 24] If people see you stumble on it. What would you do with it? How would you respond? This changed everything. He even went and he bought the field.

Amazing. What would you do? It's unusual I suppose for us to think of buried treasure. In our day. It's a little bit different. But in those days. It was actually quite normal enough.

And you have the sort of background story. Which I'll say. It kind of gives you an idea of the time. But there was a threat.

Of looting. In Palestinian houses. Back in that time. And the safest place often was. In the ground. To put the money. And there's a story comes from.

Apollonius of Tyana. He was consulted by an Indian king. About a puzzling case. A man had found a chest. Of treasure. In a piece of land. That he had bought.

- [14 : 24] And the former owner. Was claiming it. And Apollonius gave it. As his verdict. That an inquiry. Should be held. Into the character. Of the two men. The previous owner.
- And the current owner. For he said. Surely the gods. Would not allow. Somebody unjust. To get the money. So.
- The investigation was made. And sure enough. The seller. Was a dodgy character. So therefore. He'd neglected. To sacrifice. To the gods. And the finder.
- Was devout. And pious. So justice. Was seen to be done. But it's stories. Like this. Which tell us. It wasn't so unusual. To have treasure.
- Buried. In those days. As it might be today. Not just in the bible. Our stories. Of buried treasure. Normal. Jesus knew. That people would relate. And the rabbis.
- [15 : 21] Even had a saying. There's only one safe place. For money. And it's in the ground. And that's our lesson. For today. No. Sorry.
- So basically. The people could relate. To what he was saying. And the tiny parable. Has an impact. The man in the parable. Who found the treasure.
- Stumbled on it. And he knew the value. Immediately. He immediately went out. And he bought the field. The simple meaning.
- And at that time. The law even said. The money belongs to you. Even if you find the treasure. That. It belongs to you.
- If you find it. So why buy the field? Why even go out to that bother? When you didn't need to buy the field? Maybe we could look at deeper reasons.
- [16 : 16] He bought the field. But. The simple meaning. The simple meaning. When he found that treasure. He sacrificed everything for it. When he found that treasure.
- There was nothing he wouldn't have done. Buying the field is easy. He's found the treasure. Nothing else. Matters.
- Anymore. Things have changed. He's found the treasure. Suddenly the priorities are different. Suddenly the way we see our lives.
- We see Monday morning. And it's different. Because we've found the treasure. The struggles we face. We've found the treasure. It's all in the context.
- Of this treasure. It's a deeper meaning.
- [17 : 14] Simple story. Deeper meaning. Some people stumble. On Jesus. When they least expect it.
- The moment of discovery. Changes their lives. Everything else. Pales into insignificance. Sometimes even as a Christian.
- We discover afresh. The gospel. And we see the kingdom of God. In a different light. And the Lord's hand is on our lives. And we see it afresh.
- Maybe we realise. We've been too apathetic. For too long. Or we've been. Messing. In our lives. Enough is enough. Because we've seen. We've seen that the Lord is demanding everything from us.
- It's the beginning. It's a new beginning afresh. Because we've found this treasure again. What a gift. The treasure is.
- [18 : 14] This sudden discovery doesn't come from searching. It comes in the normal course of our everyday life.
- One Tuesday afternoon. When things are at their most normal. One day when we're least expecting.

Just doing what we're doing. On a daily basis. The simple task that God has for you to do. And something changes.

And we discover this incredible treasure. Afresh as believers. Or maybe if we're non-believers. We discover the treasure for the first time.

Just in the normal daily course. It might be that we're struggling in one way or the other.

[19 : 16] It might be in our job. Or it might be in our family life. Or it might be health reasons. Things that are difficult for us. Might be all kinds of pressures.

It might be sin in our life. And the Lord comes. And we realize this treasure. Is everything.

And we see it afresh. Totally in this parable there's a response. And an immediate recognition. Of the find.

And the value. And the need for action. It's not a case of analyzing it. Over analyzing it. Wondering. Is it really treasure?

It seems crazy to look at it that way. But imagine if you saw the treasure and went. I wonder what I'll do. I wonder how I should act. What's the natural thing to do here?

[20 : 15] Maybe I'll think about it for a while. Crazy. We've discovered treasure. We act on it. When we discover the gospel.

The treasure of the kingdom. It demands a response. Sometimes the awareness of sin. We should respond. Sometimes the realization we've been apathetic.

We must respond. No delays. This is the treasure. Take it. Seize the day. Because this may be the chance.

That the Lord is giving us. To respond to him. We then come to the next parable. And it's the parable of the pearl.

And a pearl is different to treasure. A pearl is different. It's something of a fascination. You don't just put a price on a pearl.

[21 : 15] You wonder at a pearl. They talk about the worship of a pearl in Roman times. And that really goes back to Egypt. The Jewish Talmud talks that the pearl has been beyond price.

Pearl merchants search the world for great specimens. And they found them in the Red Sea. And in the Persian Gulf. India. And even Britain. Which obviously does include Scotland at this time.

Again it's a simple story. A man who spent his life searching for the perfect pearl. And when he found it he sold everything he had.

Sold everything he had. And he bought it. It wasn't a sudden discovery like the treasure. He'd seen many pearls. But this was the one. This was the pearl above all others.

Again it makes us think. What do we long for in our lives? What's the beautiful thing among all the beautiful things that we could have?

[22 : 28] We sing all the vain things that charm me most. And sacrificing them to his love. But there's nothing in contrast to this one thing.

This one thing that you would long for. If we caught a glimpse of it. The most beautiful thing. Would we recognize it? Would we sell everything we had just to have it?

It's possible. It's possible. It's possible. It's possible. It's possible. Like we saw with the treasure. To discover the kingdom by accident. To hear the gospel like treasure for the first time unexpectedly.

But it's also possible to discover the kingdom after a long search. The two parables contrast. But they complement.

Think of the apostle Paul. And he's seeking all his life to be religious. And yet he confronts Jesus on the Damascus road.

[23 : 29] And for him it was like the most beautiful pearl. He's been searching all his life. And all this religion is just ugly.

Compared to the beauty of meeting Jesus. You think of Nicodemus. Maybe it was the same.

He's been engulfed in this religious scene for so long. Or Cornelius as a God fearer. And he needs to discover the pearl.

Which is the beauty of the gospel. That invested their lives in religion. But it wasn't the real thing. Or Zacchaeus. It's like a treasure.

He doesn't. He would never have expected it. The last thing he would have expected. And he stumbles on Jesus by accident one day almost. And life is turned upside down.

[24 : 33] And he's been surrounded by money. But this is the greatest treasure. Than all the money he'd ever had. Or the Samaritan woman.

And all she's doing is going out to get the water. And she's struggling out there. Maybe she's going at a time of day when nobody's there. We don't know for sure.

But certainly her life was difficult. And she discovers Jesus for the first time. And it's this incredible treasure.

And she tells everyone. Everyone. Look who I've met. Jesus. Is like the pearl. He's like the treasure. When the man found the pearl.

He responded by selling everything he had to buy it. And he gave up all the second best. For the sake of the best. Gave up everything that was second best.

[25 : 29] For what was best. That sort of giving up. Is familiar in the gospels. Like the early followers. We leave everything for the Lord.

Even today. Christians. Need to give up their possessions for the gospel. All the time. To serve the Lord. Christians give up comfort.

For the sake of the gospel. All the time. The rich young ruler. You cannot serve God and money. Christians often need to give up. Or sacrifice.

In our relationships. Our ties. The way we see our lives. The priorities. Reputation in this world.

Aims and ambitions. Laid down. Because we've found the greatest treasure. Or we've found the pearl. The supreme loyalty.

[26 : 27] Is to the Lord. The Christian call. The Christian call is not easy. It's not necessarily logical. In this world. Eyes. But it's a step of faith.

It asks. And it costs a lot. We may not even know the full cost. When we take hold of that treasure. We may not even know for sure.

What it is the Lord would call us to do. Down the line. For him. Like in these chapters. The Christian call. We looked at the way that the parables divide people.

Like in these chapters. The Christian call is easy to turn away from. It's hard. And yet when it's a treasure.

And yet when it's a pearl. Then surely we respond. Does the parable move you to respond?

[27 : 31] Do you see with your eyes. That this is talking about the gospel. And the person of Jesus. And knowing him.

And knowing him. Is the greatest treasure. Knowing him is like a pearl. Of such value.
That you would leave all the others behind. Everything is different on a Monday morning.

Because we have him. Yes. I want that treasure. I'm going for that treasure.

I'm not going for anything else. I wouldn't have it any other way. There's a famous story.
Of Shackleton. And he advertised.

For volunteers. For his South Pole expedition. For men to accept. The threat of danger.
And death. In the snow. And the ice. And the notice was fairly clear.

[28 : 35] You may not come back. You may die. Did he get any offers? Did anyone step forward?
He was inundated.

With letters. Inundated with people. In every walk of life. Men were coming in hordes. For
the privilege. Of this great adventure. And Jesus asks you and me.

Are you prepared to give it up. All of it. For me. Are you prepared to recognize. The beauty
of this gospel. Which is like a treasure. Or.

Like the pearl. Because you see. He gave. It all up. For us. He gave it all up. For me. On
the cross.

When Jesus died. He didn't take the glory. On himself. To redeem his people.

[29 : 36] He died. For them. There's a poem about the crucifixion. And the soldiers gambled for his
clothes. On the cross.

He was a gambler too. My Christ. He took his life. And threw it for a world redeemed. And
here his agony was done. Before the westering sun went down.

Crowning that day with its crimson crown. He knew that he had won. All that he had done.
For us. When you think of these words.

In Philippians 3. Verse 7 and 8. Philippians 3. Verse 7 and 8. Just as we close. Whatever
was to my prophet. I now consider loss.

For the sake of Christ. What is more. I consider everything a loss. Compared to the
surpassing greatness. Of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

[30 : 40] For whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish. That I may gain Christ. And
be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own.

That comes from the law. But that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness that
comes from God. Is by faith. Let's bow our heads.

And pray together. Let's pray. Lord we thank you for the words.

Of these parables. And Lord as we read them. They speak to our hearts. And we thank
you Lord. For ears to hear.

And eyes to see. And I pray Lord. For each one here this morning. That we would each of
us. Have those ears. And have those eyes. And pray Lord.

[31 : 44] That whether we have been Christians. For a long time. Whether we are new Christians.
Whether we are still seeking you. I pray Lord we would see.

That this is treasure. That must be taken. That you are treasure. The greatest treasure.
The treasure above all else.

Lord I pray that we would see. The beauty. Of you. So often in our lives. We hear about
religion. And we see religion.

Which is not beautiful. And it puts pressure on. It puts burdens on people. And yet the
gospel Lord. That we read about in your word. Is so different.

Such an amazingly beautiful gospel. Of grace and freedom and hope. And I pray we
would see that. And long for that.

[32 : 42] Help us this week. As we go from here. And serve you where you have us Lord. In the workplaces. In college. In the homes.

In the neighborhoods. Where you have us. Help us Lord. To serve you with all our hearts. And know that we have this amazing treasure. When we serve you.

Give us your grace this morning. To understand we pray. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.