

The precious kingdom

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[0:00] Okay, so tonight we're going to be looking at these three verses in Matthew, that's verses 44 to 46 in Matthew 13. The plan is we're going to be looking at the context to all the things surrounding these verses, and we'll see what was happening at the time that these verses were spoken.

We'll look at the details of the text and the imagery, and then we'll finish with a few conclusions. Hopefully, with God's grace, by the end we'll have an application and something that we can take with us into the week ahead.

That's really what we want from tonight, isn't it? And it's good that when we go into God's Word, we make sure we're not simply being passive in hearing it, or just storing it in memory, but that our hearts and our minds are actively pursuing what God is saying to us.

Taking God's Word on board and utilizing it in day-to-day life. That's the goal for this evening, I believe. I touched on this earlier, but on Friday, I remembered the joy that I felt when God first spoke to me.

I pray that that would be the case for all of us again tonight. Wouldn't that be a great thing to feel? Every time God spoke to us, we felt that same joy. I think we can pray for that.

[1:30] James 4, 8 says, Come near to God, and He will come near to you. You know, something I've learned as I've got older, that the closer you are to someone, the easier it is to hear them.

Makes sense, doesn't it? I just wanted to sidetrack from the main point I'll be making tonight, but I wanted to encourage everybody, because I feel very tired tonight, and I know a lot of people feel very tired on a Sunday evening and with work tomorrow.

It's just nice to encourage each other and say, Yeah, let's really take what we're hearing into the week ahead with us. So very important. So let's look at the context of these verses.

At the beginning of the chapter, the text says that Jesus came out of a house, and He went and sat by a lake. In the book of Mark, as He recounts this event, it's made pretty clear that this lake is the Sea of Galilee.

Anna will have a particularly clear image of that sea. Matthew tells us that Jesus had gathered large crowds to Him, and that He went and sat on a boat and spoke to the crowds on the shore.

[2:53] And as He began, much to the confusion of the disciples, He didn't teach as we would normally expect somebody to teach. For example, if someone was teaching science, we expect clear, concise facts.

Or maths, we expect particular things. No, Jesus began to teach in parables. I wanted just to outline the basics of this for anybody who hasn't been here in the evenings past.

So a parable is a story used to illustrate a lesson. I think most of us would know this. It doesn't have to have physically happened, but it's crafted to teach us something.

So our parables tonight are quite clearly about God's kingdom. It says that in the beginning, doesn't it? I've lost my Bible. Come back. The kingdom of heaven is like...

It says this at the beginning of each of the parables. Now, the first parable of Matthew 13, parable of the sower, in verse 19, Jesus tells us that in His explanation of the parable, that it's a kingdom thing.

[4:09] It says, when anyone hears the message about the kingdom, you know it's a kingdom thing. And all of the rest of the parables in this chapter all start with Jesus saying, the kingdom of heaven is like...

I'll just point out very quickly that it's interesting that there are seven parables in this chapter. The seven is so widely used as a number to describe something that is complete or whole.

Like in Genesis 2, 3, and God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done. We can read the first chapter in the book of Revelation where we read about the seven churches, the lampstands and the stars.

I actually could go on most of the evening talking about the number seven, but I'm not going to do that. If you've got a digital Bible, I would encourage you just to type in seven and look at all the different references that come up.

It's very, very interesting. But why parables? Why is Jesus speaking in parables? Why wouldn't Jesus just give the facts? Why use illustrations?

[5:21] It kind of goes back to what I was saying about us actively listening to God. In verse 35, Matthew tells us, so was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet, I will open my mouth in parables.

I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world. God, we heard about this subject from Ben a few weeks ago, so I'm not going to dive right into it. I'm just going to outline it.

And just actually as a side note, it's worth listening to. If you can, go on to the Calvary website and just listen to some of the back sermons on this. Very, very good. Hearing what God has to say isn't just a matter of us using our heads.

It means so much more. As Ben pointed out a few weeks ago, here we have a king revealing deep truths of the kingdom and uniquely to his people.

We see that in verse 11 of this chapter. He replied, because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. These are deep spiritual insights into his kingdom for his people.

[6:33] I point out also, did you notice in verse 36, the disciples go to Jesus and ask him for an explanation of the parable. I think that's a good habit to get into if you know Jesus, isn't it?

Something we can all do. So Jesus spent some time teaching in parables to the crowd and he returned to his house, or a house, sorry, and began to explain the parable of the weeds to his disciples.

And then he goes on to teach again in the house. And that's where we hear our two parables tonight, the hidden treasure and of the pearl. So, up on the screen, I've got some common points of both the parables.

In the first parable, we have the kingdom of heaven, a person, something incredibly valuable that's been found, and an action completed by the person to obtain the valuable thing.

In the second parable, we have the kingdom of heaven, we have a person, we have something incredibly valuable found, and we have an action completed by the person to obtain the valuable thing.

[7:53] They are very, very, very similar parables, aren't they? They're not exactly the same. Let's go through these common aspects, what these two parables have in common, and let's break them down a little bit.

So, we'll start with the first parable. It says, The kingdom of heaven is like, we know that in the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth.

It says that in the very, very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1-1. In Deuteronomy, we read, this is chapter 10, verse 14, To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, and the earth, and everything in it.

It's pretty clear that God owns everything. If we were to think of heaven, and this domain as a kingdom, we also need to consider a king, because where there is kingdom, there must be a king. On the screen is a verse from Ephesians 1. We see Paul describe beautifully God's power, as he's describing this. He says, That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

[9:30] And God placed all things under his feet, and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

There was any doubt about Jesus' authority as king. The book of Revelation describes Jesus in this way.

Chapter 17, verse 14, These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with him are called chosen and faithful.

So the kingdom of heaven belongs to God and his son as the king. I just wanted to draw out this point. When we look over this chapter, we have a very large picture painted for us of the kingdom of heaven, don't we?

That's what we saw in the text. The kingdom of heaven is like. The kingdom of heaven is like. And it's painted by the eternal king. And he's speaking in a way that's directly intended for his people.

[10:44] I want to point out, I think that's an amazing thing, isn't it? Such a big, rich description of his kingdom. And we can rest assured, this text is from the highest authority.

There's no problems with the text. There's nothing wrong about it. It's all correct and right. So, man finds treasure.

We've all been there, haven't we? You're walking through a field, stumble on some hidden treasure. It'll be nice. I love this illustration.

For me, treasure drums up all these images from when I was a child. Let's take the first part of this text. Treasure hidden in a field. There's a reason why there's so many films made about treasure. I think it's an absolutely wonderful word. Because it conjures up images of things that are extremely valuable and desirable. And yet, at the same time, they're beyond imagination or grasp, aren't they?

[11:54] They're beyond description. Pop quiz. Anybody recognize this picture? Some young people looking for treasure.

Goonies. Yeah, good. This is the Goonies. It's one of my favorite films, actually. It's a bunch of... If you haven't seen it, highly recommend it. So, when they find the treasure at the end... I'll spoil this for you now. When they find the treasure at the end, it's a big ship filled with all these wonderful kinds of treasure, riches and artifacts.

But the happy ending for them isn't them getting rich. The happy ending is in that they get their home back for good. I'm sorry about spoiling the ending for you.

The film is 30 years old now, so... The Bible says a lot about treasure. So, this man in the field, he finds treasure.

[13:01] Now, the Greek word for this apparently means a storehouse for precious things. So, Jesus is saying that God's heavenly kingdom is like this.

And this man finds it. What was his reaction? This is really interesting part for me because...

I had to read this a few times before I really grasped what was going on here. See, he found it and then he hid it again. And he went off and he sold all that he had to obtain it.

So, my first thought... Not that I would do this... Is... Why didn't he steal it?

He found it. He's in a field. There's probably not many people around. Why didn't he just take it?

Could have chucked it in the boot of a car. Take it home. Hidden it under the mattress.

[14:02] Dived into it whenever he needed it. Job's a good one. The kingdom of heaven does not work that way. This is Matthew 6.

This is probably why I was confused earlier. Matthew 6. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The process has to be legitimate. In order to get the treasure, he had to invest everything he had to buy the field.

Selling everything he owned. What does that say to us? Does it mean that once we finish here tonight, we're going to go home and stick everything on eBay?

[15:05] And we'll obtain massive treasure? I don't think so. I think that verse in Matthew 6 says it all. So we've heard so many times in the book of Matthew already, this is the thing about the heart.

I think the picture of owning a field is a picture of ongoing commitment.

Our hearts need to be in it 100%. A field is land that needs to be looked after, it needs to be cared for, it needs to be worked. It's a responsibility.

It means us being wholly present and invested. I think we can see that from the other parables in the chapter. And in this parable, the land is explicitly connected with the treasure.

One doesn't come without the other. So I think the message is clear. The man sold everything he has. Kingdom of heaven is worth more than anything else.

[16:12] Anything available. There is nothing on this earth or in this universe that is more valuable than the kingdom of heaven. Let's move on to the second parable.

So you'll notice, as we touched on earlier, it has almost exactly the same message. And I really wrestled with this.

Probably more than many of the other sermons or Bible studies that I've done, I thought to myself, why is Jesus making the same point twice? Why would Jesus need to emphasize this in this way? I couldn't wrap my head around it. And then, in trying to dig out why, why he's making the same point twice, I realize something.

He's not making the same point twice. At least, I don't think he is. The sacrifice in both of the parables is the same because the value of God's kingdom doesn't change.

[17:22] It doesn't change because God doesn't change. James 1.17 says, every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

In the second parable, whilst we see the kingdom's value is repeated, when you look closely, it's the human equation that changes.

These are very different people. This merchant is looking for pearls. He's active. He's meticulous in his investigation.

A merchant is someone that would shop around, visiting many other merchants, making inquiries, sending emails. In the end, he would have weighed up the cost.

He would have thought very seriously and he would have made the investment. And what was the investment? It was everything he had.

[18:30] Again, because the value of the kingdom didn't change. Still worth more than anything. When you think about the character of the man in the second parable, we start noticing more about the character of the man in the first parable.

The man is in a field. He finds treasure. Not by chance, but unexpectedly. And did we notice this in verse 44?

In his joy, he went and sold all that he had. In his joy. What happens when we're joyful?

What do we do when we're joyful? You discover something amazing, something wonderful, something great happens. What do you do? Bingo. You tell people.

And I love this because you can picture him, can't you? He's going off with joy and he's selling all he had with joy and I can picture him saying, here, have a free cow. I've got the kingdom. What a great example for us.

[19:45] On Friday when I gave my testimony, I felt, really felt something of this joy. Although I felt very ill actually, but the inside felt absolutely wonderful.

So full of joy because I remembered what God had done for me and God gave me the wonderful opportunity to share it with people and I thought, why am I doing this every day?

If this is the joy that I have, why can't everybody have this? Why am I withholding that from people? No, we need to be out sharing, sharing the joy that we have.

Come back. Thank you, Lord. So you might ask, why? Why is this treasure so valuable?

Why is this man's heart filled with joy? Why is the kingdom worth losing everything else for? I want you to imagine a great kingdom where there is nothing but peace, no pain, no death, no hunger.

[20:49] Everything is free. It's a true paradise in every sense of the word. The only way in is to pay for everything that you've ever done wrong. you get to the city gates and you can't pay it.

Your pockets are empty. The debt is far too big. You're standing outside the gates and you're wondering, what am I going to do? How will I possibly get into this kingdom? When suddenly, the king himself comes out and he takes your hand and he says, I've paid that price for you.

Come and live with me forever. That's exactly what Jesus does. He paid that price for us and it cost him everything.

He was beaten, tortured, hung on a cross and killed for us to have the greatest riches imaginable. There is nothing worth more than that.

Nothing. It stands to reason, doesn't it? If we know Jesus, our hearts, like the man buying the field, it should be 100% with Jesus.

[22:06] And it should be a natural response that we value nothing over the king. Nothing. Some days we don't feel like that.

the average day, some things can get us down. You don't feel too good. Something happens. Car breaks down. But this is a matter of the heart.

So our hearts need to be with the king even when things go wrong. if this isn't the case, I'm sure it is for most of us here, not all of us.

But if it isn't the case, ask yourself seriously. Do you think you're missing out on something by following Jesus? you think that you're losing something more valuable.

Maybe your heart's wandering off into other places. Ask yourself why when you've been given the greatest treasure in the world, in the universe, in existence.

[23:17] You know, Paul said in Philippians 3, But whatever was an asset to me, I count as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things as loss compared to the surpassing excellence of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have lost all things.

I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ. And I would ask myself first and then everybody else, are we thinking in this way?

And if you don't know Christ, I say this more for the benefit of the recording, if you're unfamiliar with the secrets of the kingdom, if you've never found any treasure, ask a Christian.

Ask someone that knows Christ. They'll point you the right way. It's something that we should do also. Or look in the bookcase of any good church. There's plenty of treasure over there.

As we go into our week, just a couple of things that I'd like to say as we close. Like the merchant, let's look extremely carefully at what we consider to be precious and valuable.

[24:36] From day to day, ask ourselves, is this coming before the king? Is it for the king or is it for me? If you're unsure, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Read his word. Listen to what he says. Jesus does not speak randomly. Hebrews 4.12 says, The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Go back to the word.

And remember like the man in the field, let's do this serving him with joy, with real heartfelt joy because our hearts are with him.

We have the greatest treasure ever. And always do this remembering what the king did for us. Amen.

[25:41] Amen. Let's sing. Let's sing.