

The Unequaled Value of the Kingdom

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[0:00] Pray with me. Come, fountain of every blessing. Every blessing. Oh, our King, you are King of glory, who can stand before you, and yet you shower your grace upon people like us, rebels, and you have won us by your grace.

So come now and cause your grace to fall on us in the form of your word, spoken words of life. Father, would you speak life now through what you have said, through your son's lips. In his name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Worship team, thank you guys so much. So grateful for you leading us in worship.

We're going to be in Matthew chapter 13 this morning. So you open your Bibles there. If you don't have one, look in the back of the pew in front of you. There should be one there. Children didn't need any reminding, so they're on their way.

They're eager to go. They know the routine. Well, speaking of children, when I was a kid, my mom worked as our church's secretary for a number of years.

[1:31] How many years, mom? Five? There you go. And these were like the prime years of childhood right here, the exploration phase.

And my brother and I had all kinds of fun exploring the church building, getting into a lot of trouble, and exploring the property around the church building as well.

And one day, it was a hot summer day, we were exploring a little drainage ditch behind the back of the church in the back parking lot, and to our great excitement, we saw little glints of gold shining up at us.

And in the hot Missouri sun, we dug feverishly, and we thought we had struck it rich. We thought, that's it.

We're good to go. College is paid for. We probably didn't have that on our mind. I don't know how much of this stuff we dug up, but we worked hard. We were modern-day gold rushers.

[2:28] We found stuff to sift it out, and oh, man, we were so excited. But the bummer of it all is that we brought it to our mom and found out that it was fool's gold. Iron pyrite.

Not the real deal. And if all that iron pyrite we had dug up was real gold, man, that would have been really amazing. Well, in Matthew 13, starting in verse 44, Jesus wants us to get our attention on treasure.

So let's read these two parables together. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up.

Then, in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had, and he bought it.

So here in Matthew 13, we've been peering into what Jesus is revealing about the kingdom of heaven, God's kingdom. How the kingdom is received, how the kingdom grows, how we need to respond to that kingdom.

[3:53] But now, Jesus is going to shift gears for a minute, and he's going to paint two masterful pictures depicting not how you enter the kingdom, or how you receive the kingdom, or how the kingdom grows, but rather, the kingdom's unequalled value.

The kingdom's desirability. In fact, the kingdom is so valuable, so desirable, that it is worth obtaining at any cost.

You should walk away from these parables this morning thinking, there is nothing I wouldn't give up to get this kingdom. God's kingdom is worth obtaining at any cost, because it is of unequalled value. Because the kingdom is of unequalled value, it's worth obtaining at any cost. That's the big idea. So I've got three things for us to do this morning to get that big idea sunk into us.

First, we're going to examine. Second, we're going to gaze. And third, open. Examine, gaze, open. Ego. That was accidental. I'm not trying to say anything. Ego.

[5:06] So examine, gaze, open. Let's start first by examining these parables. We're going to do it one at a time. But before we dive right in, I want to remind us of what Pastor Mike has been pointing out the past several weeks in chapter 13.

That Jesus is using parables, these little real life, easy to relate to word pictures, to compare God's kingdom to something in real life.

And when he does this, though, the parables have two functions. First, they reveal the kingdom to those who have ears to hear. They help us grasp the kingdom more fully if we have humble ears to listen.

But at the same time, it also hides the kingdom even further for those who do not have ears to hear. There is a revealing, but there's also a hiding.

And so what I want us to humbly do now is say, God, I need you to reveal the kingdom. We need humble hearts. Not proud, I've got this figured out hearts, but humble hearts to say, God, show me your kingdom.

[6:17] Help me to see that in this parable. So let's make sure our hearts are positioned well to respond with faith to these parables. So with that in mind, let's look at verse 44, and I want us to look at the parable of the hidden treasure.

Let's examine this parable. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. And in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field.

Pretty straightforward, right? Jesus can accomplish a lot in just like a sentence. A guy is in a field, finds buried treasure, keeps it hidden, goes out with joy to sell everything he has to buy the field so he can keep the treasure.

We've examined the parable. Done. Just kidding. Now if you'll pardon my pun, I want us to dig into this parable a little bit to notice a few details. My wife's probably rolling her eyes right now.

First of all, I want us to look and see how rare and surprising a discovery like this was. One did not stumble across buried treasure in the land of Israel every day.

[7:22] It's probably as common as winning the lottery today. And apparently, you're more likely to be struck by lightning, killed in a plane crash, and become a movie star, probably all three at once, than winning the lottery.

So this is probably not that likely. But it wasn't unheard of, either. Jesus' audience, his disciples, that's who he's talking to right now, they have probably heard of a few rare tales of a farmer plowing his field somewhere in Galilee and turning up some buried treasure.

After all, Palestine, the land of Israel, for hundreds of years had been subject to invading armies coming in and out. And when an invading army is coming, what else are you going to do with your family heirlooms and your life savings but hide it away?

You're going to find some kind of hardy container, hastily bury it in the ground somewhere so the marauding hordes don't get it. And then, if you're lucky enough to come back, you can dig it up and you still have what you had.

But the chances of this guy finding something like this are so close to nil that this is very rare. This is very exciting, very surprising.

[8:31] This is his lucky day. So a likely scenario that Jesus probably had in mind went something like this. This fortunate man was probably a laborer of some sort working in his boss's field, the guy who owned the field.

And while he's working, whether he's digging an irrigation ditch or plowing a field, his tool strikes something in the ground that's not dirt, it's not rock, it goes thud or clank or something.

And he uncovers it, he can tell that it's extremely valuable but he doesn't lift it out and then he covers it back up. Why? Why wouldn't he just lift it out and say, woohoo? Well, it wasn't his field. Technically, it was his boss's field, most likely. The law of the rabbis at this time did say that finders keepers, basically.

If you find hidden treasure in the field, it's yours. No matter who owns the field. But, if the laborer lifts it out, the owner could potentially claim that he had sent the laborer to go dig the treasure out and therefore say that it's the owner's treasure, not the laborer's.

[9:44] And so, the only surefire way to get the treasure was to obtain the field. So, what does this guy do? He went, he sold all that he had, and he bought the field.

He liquidated his assets and exchanged his entire material life for that field and for what it contained. Just for a moment, let me take you on a little mental exercise.

I want you to imagine all of your assets. Start with your possessions. Just get this in your mind. From your toothbrush to your bed, your home decorations, your baseball cards in the attic, your grandmother's china, your favorite coffee mug, the contents of your safe or your safe deposit box, your car, your house, your books on your bookshelf, that's a hard one for me, your phone, your tools, everything you've got.

Everything except the shirt on your back. Okay, so you've got all your possessions. Now, add to that every cent you own. In your checking account, in your savings account, in your retirement, all that you've got from the cash in your wallet to your spare change, all that you've got.

Now, imagine taking all of that and exchanging it for one thing. But notice, it was not because he felt like he should.

[11:14] It was not out of obligation. Did you notice that little phrase? In his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field.

So this is what this guy did. In a fraction of a second, this guy's looking at the treasure. In a fraction of a second, he mentally takes all that he's got, all of his possessions, all of his life savings, everything he's got, and he puts it on one end of a scale and he puts the treasure he had just found on the other end.

And when he sees the treasure break the scale with its immeasurable value and tosses meager assets up into the air like feathers, he drops his shovel, he runs to his house, he shouts to his wife that he's going to sell everything to go buy that field.

He tells his kids he's made the most joyful discovery he's ever made and he bought the field without a second thought. There was no deliberation, no foot dragging.

He didn't stop to ponder the cost-benefit analysis. He was exchanging pennies for millions. Who would need to stop and think about that? This was an easy decision.

[12:24] So what does this parable tell us? It tells us that the kingdom is the most joyful discovery you will ever make. And once you find it, once you realize what you found, it'll be a joy to give up whatever you gotta give up to get it.

And this is very similar to what the next parable tells us, only with a slightly different emphasis.

Verse 45, Jesus gets a slightly different image in our heads.

We have a merchant now on hunt for fine pearls. Now, in the ancient world, pearls were extremely rare, especially fine ones.

We didn't have the capacity back then to make synthetic pearls as we do now, artificial pearls. And so they were on par with gold in terms of value. And unlike the chap in the previous parable, this merchant's already wealthy.

If he's able to be hunting down the finest pearls on the market, he's got the means to be able to do that. And he obviously knows his stuff. He has an eye for what he's looking for.

[13:36] He knows a fine pearl when he sees one. I would not be able to tell you anything, but this guy has an eye for quality, for beauty, and for value. His livelihood depended on it. And one day, he found it.

He found the pearl. In verse 45, notice that he's on the search of fine pearls, plural, and then he finds the one.

The one pearl of great value. As one commentator puts it, this is the one pearl that once you have it, you don't need anymore. It was the pearl he didn't expect to find.

It was find beyond his imagination. And this merchant does the same thing as the man in the previous parable. He takes decisive action.

He goes, sells everything he's got, and he buys the pearl. But unlike the man with the treasure, this man couldn't live off the pearl. It wasn't for the kind of bank that he's going to make.

[14:39] It's just to have the pearl. Just to possess something of such fine, fine beauty. Not to profit off of it, but to possess it, to have it. And by the way, Jesus isn't telling us these pearls for them to walk on all fours.

We're not meant to critique the ethics of the man who found the treasure, whether he should have told the owner of the field or not, or we're not supposed to critique the wisdom of the merchant selling. Everybody's got that for a little pearl. The point of these parables is to illustrate how immeasurably valuable the kingdom is.

And the price paid to get the kingdom is unquestionably and joyfully worth it. So we've examined the parables.

The kingdom is the most joyful discovery you'll ever make. It's the most valuable object you could ever seek. Once you find it, there's nothing you can compare it to.

And exchanging it for all that you have is unquestionably worth it. It's pennies for millions. It's a no-brainer. But you might be sitting there and wondering, okay, Billy, I get that Jesus is saying the kingdom is immeasurably valuable.

[15:56] I see it's worth exchanging all I have to get it. But can I have a little explanation on what it is? What is the kingdom? Why is it so valuable?

Can you maybe open up that treasure box a little bit and let me just see it so I can know? And maybe run my fingers through it. Can I hold the pearl, feel it on my fingertips a little bit so I can know that it's worth selling everything I've got to get it?

Yes. We can do that. Let's gaze at this kingdom. Let's gaze at this treasure. So we're going to do a little gaze at a glimpse. Kind of just open the treasure box and let you see kind of the whole thing for a minute and I just want to pick up one little gem that's right here in the passage and I want us to gaze at that.

So let's just kind of start from a glimpse. What is this kingdom we're talking about? Well, as Mike has said in previous sermons, this is the kingdom. It's God's saving reign.

It's coming under God's rule. It's God's redeeming activity in the world. Wherever there are people who recognize God as their king, that's where the kingdom is. And this has been the story of all of the Old Testament.

[17:10] From the garden, God's people in God's place living under his rule and then it's broken because we refuse to acknowledge God as our king.

We refuse to see how great and valuable he is. It's broken. That kingdom is shattered and then God reestablishes it by his grace by choosing one people and establishing his rule over that one people, Israel, and setting up his king, King David, over that kingdom and then even that kingdom falls apart because God's people still reject his rule and his reign.

But then this guy named Jesus shows up on the scene and he says, the kingdom of heaven is here. It's here now. all of a sudden we're beginning to see that the kingdom of God is God's reign over not only all creation but particularly his people and the good that he's doing over his people with his rule over his people.

So that's the treasure box. If you're looking at the treasure just all as a whole, that's the treasure box. There's so many blessings we can pull out of it. We're under his good and perfect law.

We're experiencing his presence. We're able to receive his mercy and forgiveness. We're able to escape from judgment. We have eternal life when we're near him and under his rule. There's so many good blessings, little pieces of gold we can pick up and run through our fingers.

[18:30] But there's one thing that I want us to look at right here in the passage. You see that little word in verse 44? The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden, hidden in a field.

That's not the first time that Jesus is referred to the kingdom as hidden, even in this chapter. Look back up to verse 34 and 35. We're going to find some great value of the kingdom in its hiddenness.

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in verse 34, in parables, indeed he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet. I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.

And then in verse 33, when Jesus compares the kingdom of God to leaven working its way through a lump of dough in the flour, it's hidden in the flour.

Do you notice that in verse 33? And then we see that this kingdom is something that's hidden since the foundation of the world. And now it's revealed.

[19:41] something that was secret. Something that was not known. And now it's beginning to be revealed through these parables. And Jesus' disciples are wondering, back in verse 10, Jesus, why are you speaking to these people in parables?

And he begins to describe why the kingdom is hidden and then how it's revealed. He says that in verse 13 through 15, he starts to quote Isaiah 6.

And he says that we as humans, we hear, but we don't understand. We see, but we don't perceive. Our heart is grown dull so that we, the truth is right in front of us.

It's hidden in plain sight. But we don't get it. We can't get it. Our hearts are too dull because of our hardness of sin and not being able to respond to the truth of the king that we hear, but we don't hear.

We see, but we don't see. The kingdom is hidden in plain sight. If we were to stop there, that would not be the kingdom's great value. That would be the kingdom's great tragedy that we see it in plain sight, but we don't get it.

[20:53] But it doesn't stop there. Notice what Jesus says in verse 16. Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear.

Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see and did not see it and to hear what you hear and did not hear it. So we're picking up this gem of the kingdom and we're seeing that it was once hidden.

Now it's revealed. I don't know if you've ever been brought in on a secret, but being brought in on a secret is kind of fun.

There's a sense of value when you're brought in to a secret. I hope that you've read or seen the movie *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

If you haven't, the story is that these four children walk into this world called Narnia. They don't know what's going on. They're clueless. And they run into this talking beaver and this talking beaver pulls them deep into the closest thicket of the forest and he's trying to get them away from any potential spies that might hear what he's about to tell them.

[22:10] He's about to reveal to them a secret and they have no idea what's going on. They're like, what's going on? And then he brings them in and he brings them close and he says, come on, close, close. You could see the whiskers trembling with excitement with this little beaver and he says, Aslan is on the move.

And they didn't have a clue what that meant. They didn't know who Aslan was, but they were brought into a secret and all of a sudden that began to affect them. And they began to realize the preciousness of that truth that was just revealed to them.

The kingdom was once hidden from our eyes, all of us, because we were, like Paul tells us in Romans 1, we could see the kingship of God in God's creation plain as day.

We could see it was plain to us that he is the king, that God created this world, that he is, as absolute moral authority over all of creation.

It's plain as day, but we don't see it. And then all of a sudden, by grace, we do. The kingdom is revealed.

[23:18] We're led into a secret, and it's in that rarity of hearing the secret of the kingdom of God that the kingdom is all of a sudden very valuable.

You don't go to an art show and lay down millions of dollars for a copy of a painting, for something that anyone can get.

You go to an art show and lay down millions of dollars for that one, because it's so rare. It's in the rarity of the kingdom, of having our eyes opened by the king.

And that's what happened to these disciples. They saw Jesus, they were called by Jesus, and they began to follow Jesus, and they realized that, hey, here's the king. And sooner or later, they realized the secret of the kingdom is revealed to us.

Not because of anything we do, but because of sheer grace. And not only is the kingdom so rare and valuable because those whose eyes can see the kingdom are only those whose eyes have been opened by the kingdom, or by the king to see the kingdom.

[24:27] Not only is it so rare and valuable, but it is also costly. Because the one who brought us under his reign paid a very high price for us to be able to come under his reign.

Our king is also our priest, our mediator, our sacrifice. So this is the kingdom of heaven. If we gaze at the infinite worth of the kingdom, the infinite worth of this king, then all we've got here and now, it's pennies for millions.

It's a no-brainer. And it's not fool's gold. It's the real deal. Alright, so we've examined we've gazed and now I want us to open a few things.

First, let's respond to God's word by opening a few things. First, let's open our eyes. The king is putting hidden treasure in plain view.

So do you see it? Do you recognize the unequalled value of the kingdom? Living under the rule of King Jesus is worth giving up anything and everything.

[25:38] Let me read Paul's words in Philippians 3 to you. But whatever gain I had, I counted it as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For his sake, I suffer the loss of all things and I count them as trash, rubbish, in order 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 comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends on faith.

Do you hear Paul's sold out joy? His determination to get the one thing that is worth having? Paul is saying, all that I've got, it's loss compared to the gain of getting the kingdom.

I want to belong to Jesus. I want to come under his rule. I want the gain of the king and the kingdom. I want the whole package of saying yes to Jesus no matter what it costs me now.

So do you see it? Let's open our eyes and just see the value, the worth of the king and the kingdom. If you're sitting here this morning and you're wondering, I don't know if I see it.

[26:51] I don't know if I get it. I don't know if I'm in it. I don't know what there is. Please, please hear, don't just let that sit.

Act on it. Act on God is beginning to open your eyes to see the treasure that's hidden in plain sight. There will be people down here to help you out with that after the service.

I'll be down there. I'd love to pray with you. Second, open your hands. We want to open our hands. We want to look and see what we've got in this life.

Just take a moment to personally assess, what have I got? Have I counted it up? Have I counted the cost of all that I've got in this life from my money to my possessions to my career, my family, my talents, my dreams, my car, my home, my time, my energy?

Remember, all you've got here is pennies for millions. is laying down the kingdom of self that you've got here in your hands, is it worth it to gain the kingdom of heaven?

[28:07] Is there anything that you're tempted in these hands of yours to say, no, no, not that. That's worth more to me than the kingdom is. Listen to what Jesus is saying.

He's saying, lay it all down. If I could use a quote that just never gets tired, Jim Elliott said, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep.

That's the kingdom of self. To gain what he cannot lose, that's the kingdom of heaven. If you're saying that the kingdom isn't worth losing this, then Jesus is gently but firmly telling you in these parables, you're wrong.

It is. Trust him. As Andrew Peterson, songwriter, said, when it's all you have, it's all you'll ever need. Next, I want you to open your hood.

I've opened my hood to my car a few times to see what's going on in there. I want us to open the hood of our lives and see what's driving that. What's driving, what's the engine that's driving our lives?

[29:14] Is it affections for the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, or is it affections for something else? Not to say that things of this world aren't good, they are, that there are good gifts from the creator, they are, but what's driving your life?

What's the functional treasure of your heart? Is it the kingdom of self? Or is it the kingdom of heaven? Whose rule are you under?

And how is that driving your life? So I want us to open that hood and take some of that into consideration. Lastly, last thing I want us to open is, if you get it, if you see it, if you realize all I've got here is pennies for millions, then open your mouth.

Open your mouth, there are many who, all of us were once in the dark of living for self, and Jesus is saying, go out and tell.

This kingdom is treasure buried in a field. It's the finest thing you could ever have. If you've got treasure, your mouth's going to talk about it.

[30:30] So open your mouth. Let's pray and let's ask God's help to respond well. Father, thank you that you have revealed your word to us.

You've revealed your kingdom to us through the mouth of your son, Jesus Christ. Thank you, King Jesus, that you came to bring the kingdom to us. And thank you, God, that there is nothing more valuable than your kingdom.

Father, help us as a church, help us as individuals to recognize that it is worth, joyfully worth every cost to receive the kingdom.

Father, help us to live for your saving reign. May that be the engine that drives our lives, may be the treasure that our hearts so desperately want.

Father, help us to give up what we cannot keep to get what we cannot lose. Help us to respond in faith now by your spirit.

[31:42] Help us to make decisions of obedience to respond to this truth. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.