

The Worth of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Our friends, let's pray. Our Father and God, we thank you so much for all that you've given us in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that he shapes all that we are and all that we shall do.

Our Father, we pray that you'd teach us of him today and help us to live in the light of what we learn. Please be at work amongst us by your spirit. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Well, friends, he had been a very successful, influential businessman in his time. He did have some idiosyncrasies, but he was their grandfather and he'd left them an inheritance.

It was a farming property. So the grandchildren did what any sensible people would do, that is they went down to take a look at it. They'd never been there before. And there they were. Garages.

Garage after garage after garage. And in them, cars. Car after car after car. Some 60 of them. Some of them had aged badly.

[1 : 07] Others had aged well. Anyway, the children did the sensible thing and they got some auctioneers to come and check out the barns, the garages and their contents. And the grandchildren then went to have a look.

Here are some photos of what they found. So just have the first one or two. Have a look at that one. Have a look at the second one. That's the state that some were in. Have a look at the next one.

There's an example. Now I want you to look at this next two together. That is this one. We'll have the next slide. Have a look at those two cars. The one on the left, covered with newspapers, is a Ferrari.

It is one famously sat in by Jane Fonda. The one on the right is a, and those of you who know cars will know all of this, but I don't.

So the one on the right is a Maserati AG200 Berlinetta Grand Sport Freer. It is one of only three in the world.

[2 : 11] Look at this one. Next one. That is a Ferrari 250 GT California SYB that has been sitting on that farm for 50 years.

This is only two or three years ago that these were found. And look at the next one. This is a Talbot Largo T26 Cabriolet owned by Egyptian King Farouk.

Anyway, as you can imagine, the auctioneers were gobsmacked. Probably licking their lips as well, I would have thought. The estimate they gave to the grandchildren of the value of the cars in their present state was \$12 to \$15 million.

And finally, it went a year or two later to auction. Now, you can imagine the scene. I mean, you know what lovers of cars are like. There were people who had looked for and longed for these cars. There had been rumours that some of these cars still existed somewhere, somehow. People had searched. They had speculated. And finally, some of them had been found.

[3 : 17] Anyway, the star of the show was the Ferrari. It sold for a world record price of \$18.5 million US dollars.

Friends, for collectors of cars, that car represented the chance of a lifetime. The chance to own something of extreme value. Not to everyone.

Now, some of you may regard some of that as obscene. But nevertheless, that is what some people valued that car at. I want you to keep this story in mind.

You see, our passages for today have echoes, I think, of these stories, which I'll point out to you.

And this story of treasure on a farm will help us understand, I think, what Jesus is saying.

So keep them in mind. We can move past the pictures. Thank you. Now, in order to understand our passage for today, we need to remember the context. So hopefully you do remember. Let's remember where we've been so far.

[4 : 15] You remember that Jesus came into the world with great credentials. However, Israel, since he came, has largely been hard-hearted. Their leaders, in particular, have rejected Jesus and accused him of being of the evil one.

That's chapters 8 through to 12. And to confirm their hard-heartedness, Jesus speaks to them in parables. Those who receive Jesus can access the parables.

But those who reject Jesus just get parables. Those parables confirm their hard-heartedness. And now, since then, we've heard a variety of parables from Jesus.

In the first 23 verses of chapter 13, we've basically heard that Israel fails to respond to Jesus because of their hard-heartedness.

Last week, the emphasis changed. In verses 24 to 30 and in 36 to 43, we heard of another reason for their lack of response. So on the one hand, hard-heartedness.

[5 : 13] But on the other hand, there was the cunning wiles of the evil one who snuck around at night, as it were, planting his own children in the world. But there was another reason that was revealed as well.

It was that the kingdom was deceptively humble in its presence. Do you remember it? The mustard seed? Do you remember the yeast? It didn't look like much. It looked like those things. It looked like a mustard seed.

It looked like leaven. It didn't look like much at all. But Jesus promised that its day would come. And that's where we've been so far. Hard-heartedness in Israel.

The devil's work in the world. The kingdom deceptively humble in its manifestation. Let's now turn to our parables for today. Chapter 13, 44 to 50.

Now, I want you to notice the first two parables are somewhat similar. There's a parable of the treasure, verse 44. Then there's the parable of the pearl, 45 and 46. Both parables are about how believers in Jesus should respond to the presence of the kingdom in Jesus.

[6 : 15] Let's look at the first one. Verse 44, Jesus says, The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all that he had and bought that field.

It's the element of unexpected surprise that comes to the forefront in this parable, isn't it? Look at verse 44. The treasure in the field was not something discovered by a cunning treasure hunter. No, it was found by some farmer, some hired hand, going about their daily grind of work. Now, the only thing they might have been seeking was a day's wage, probably. But suddenly they come across this treasure.

They found this great thing. Like, in one sense, the grandchildren of this man who had no idea what they were going to find. They found a car hoard of a once very successful but then failed businessman, their grandfather, Roger Bailon.

It was not a case of seek and you shall find. No, rather it was a case of accidental and completely unexpected surprise.

[7 : 24] Now, the grandchildren didn't need to do what the field hand in the story did. They didn't need to go and sell everything they had because it was a gift to them. This man in the parable, though, he had not inherited it.

No, he had to go and sell everything and buy it. But, you know, I wonder if the grandchildren have found it. They may very well have gone and sold everything that they had to buy this hoard for the sake of the car treasure in it.

The kingdom of heaven is like this, you see. Now, let's look at the merchant, verses 45 and 46.

Look at these verses with me. Jesus says, again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.

When he found one of great value, he went away and he sold everything he had and bought it.

Now, I hope you can see the situation here is very different from the treasure in the field. You see, the pearl of great value is not discovered by chance.

Now, it's discovered by a person with a skilled eye looking deliberately for pearls to buy. The person is like, I think, the person who bought the Ferrari. Okay?

[8 : 31] They knew the market. They knew that somewhere there might be that Ferrari. They kept their eye on the market. And when the auction came, they knew what it was worth and are willing to give whatever they had to get it.

Friends, what do you think Jesus is telling us here? I think it's crystal clear. He's telling us three things. He's telling us, one, that the kingdom comes with the chance of a lifetime. The kingdom comes with the chance of a lifetime. Two, it elicits its presence. Mere presence in the world elicits joy. Three, however, if you want to take advantage of its presence, you need to be decisive.

Without decisiveness, there will be no capitalizing on the opportunity presented. There can be no dilly-dallying with this. You see, there must be a major commitment. There's a high cost involved. Now, in the case of cars, there was no cost involved for the grandchildren. Not so in the parable. And not so for the person who bought the Ferrari.

[9 : 38] In both parables, you see, the price is high. Both the purchaser of the treasure in the field and of the pearl needed to sell everything they had.

Neither of the men in the two parables get something for nothing, like the grandchildren. No. However, both of them, if I can put it this way, get something for everything.

Okay? Friends, please hear this. The kingdom of heaven comes to you and to me as the chance of a lifetime. It is a thing of great joy because it brings us into relationship with God.

And we need to decide on it. And there can be no vacillating. No dilly-dallying around. We need to leave everything to follow Jesus. Everything else must be put aside for him.

But beware, friends, the kingdom comes with a great cost. You will need to sacrifice yourself to gain it. You will need to take up your cross and follow Jesus.

[10 : 41] The kingdom does not involve getting something for nothing like the grandchildren of Roger Bailon. No. In the case of the kingdom of heaven, you do not get something for nothing.

However, you do get something for everything. Those of you who have left everything to follow Jesus will gain everything. Listen to the interaction between Peter and Jesus in Matthew 19. In verse 27, Peter says, We have left everything to follow you. What then will there be for us? And Jesus responds, Truly, I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

That's the twelve. But listen to how he goes on. Friends, can you hear these two parables?

Listen to these words of Jesus. If you haven't done it yet, then recognize what is in front of you, what is here, and give everything for this treasure in a field.

[12 : 02] Give everything for the pearl of great value, the kingdom. Yes, you will pay with the cost of your own life. That is the cost for gaining this. You will need to give up your whole life for the sake of Jesus and his kingdom.

You will need to take up your cross and follow him. But you will gain everything that counts, everything that matters, and the gains will be eternal.

The kingdom of heaven, you see, involves a great cost. But you will get something for everything. That is, for everything that you give. Listen to the Apostle Paul.

He, in Philippians chapter 3, is mimicking or, sorry, echoing the same things. But he says, Whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of gaining Christ.

What is more, I consider everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them as garbage.

[13 : 05] It's dung, he says, 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 that comes from God on the basis of faith.

You see, I want to know Christ. Yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. You see, there's a man who's embraced the kingdom.

Now let's turn to the parable of the net. Look at 47 to 50. Jesus says, once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown, let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.

When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up to the shore and they sat down and they collected the good fish in baskets. They threw the bad away. That's how it'll be at the end of the age.

The angels will come, separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now this parable is like the previous two in some ways.

[14 : 10] What is like it? It's another parable that's not in any other gospel. That is, it's found only here in the New Testament. And it matches the parable of the weeds that we met a couple of weeks

ago.

The meaning is similar. However, the focus is somewhat different. Here we're taken immediately to the end of the age. And the last judgment is taking place. Now let me tell you a bit about the net that's being used here.

It's a drag net. That is, it's a net that you could take out on two boats, drop into the water and then bring to the shore and then haul it in. Or you could have one part of the net on the shore, take the other part way out and then haul it in.

It is a net that is undiscerning in itself. That is, every kind of fish is just going to be hauled up in it. So when you pull it up onto the shore, there's everything there. Now, while I could refer to a mixed race or nature of the haul, my suspicion is it refers to the mixed character of the haul.

That is, that there are good and bad in it. Now, the good and the bad might be good for eating and bad for eating. That is, it might be acceptable and unacceptable.

[15:19] But Jesus defines them in verse 49. He says there, the wicked and the righteous. The wicked and the righteous. Now, you need to understand this point. You see, in these last three weeks, we've been listening to the message of Jesus.

He's been telling us things of eternal consequence. And you've been reacting. And your reaction may have simply been to let it sweep over you. You go home each week totally unchanged.

Or you might intellectually engage but be spiritually dull. Or you spiritually engage but it's temporary and flighty. You know, here today, gone tomorrow. But Jesus is saying that your reaction to him and the message about him is of eternal consequence.

You see, God will judge all people on the last day, including you and including me. And on that day, he will gather together the righteous for further service and safekeeping eternally.

But he'll discard the worthless and the unredeemed. And he'll cast aside those who have not taken him and his message seriously. We need to take very serious note about this. This is the word of God.

[16:29] This is God's true word. Be aware of this. Don't neglect this. The words of Jesus concern matters of eternal consequence. And so I plead with you. Take note here.

Embrace him. It's very important. And let me show you the final two verses. Look at what Jesus says because he now turns to these 12.

These disciples following him. And he turns to us and metaphorically to many centuries later. And he says, have you understood these things? And they reply, yes.

And he says to them, every teacher. Therefore, every teacher of the law who's become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.

Let me see if I can explain what I think. Let me explain what I think is going on here. First, notice that Jesus asks his disciples if they understand all these things. That is, he's saying, are you like the outsiders who are hard hearted?

[17:27] Or are you true insiders who grasp the meaning of what I've been saying and see its great worth? And the disciples say, yes, we're the latter. That is, we understand these eternal matters that you are talking about.

And then Jesus addresses them. And he speaks of every teacher of the law. Literally, he talks about every scribe. The word scribe is the same word that's used to people such as Ezra, who we read about in our Old Testament reading for today.

Scribes were teachers of God's way to God's people. Teachers of what the Old Testament said, particularly the Old Testament law, and explained it to them and said, this is a ramifications for you. Jesus qualifies what sort of scribe he's speaking about. He says, the scribes I'm talking about are different from Ezra. Well, he doesn't put it that way, but that's what he's saying. And they're certainly different from the scribes of his own day.

They are scribes who are disciples of the kingdom of heaven. You see, Jesus is speaking about a whole new breed of Bible interpreters, I think. That is, believers in Jesus.

[18:33] They stand in line with Moses and Ezra and other interpreters of the Bible, but they are different. They come to the scriptures with a new insight. They come to the scriptures having been transformed through their apprehension of Jesus as the fulfillment of the kingdom that the scriptures spoke about.

They've met in Jesus the new reality of the kingdom of heaven. That means they're able to do much more than the existing scribes of their day. And they're able to do much more than readers, than Jewish readers of scriptures.

They have met in Jesus the new reality of the kingdom of heaven. And you see, so they can not only produce what is old. That is, they can not only do what the scribes do, but this new breed of disciple scribes can do something else.

They can bring out of the same treasures of scripture, both new and old. I want you to notice that Jesus gives some priority and precedence to the new, not to the old, to the new.

And that makes sense. You see, the fulfilling of the scriptures in Jesus transforms how we understand those scriptures. Because the disciples, they know that they have their focus and the scriptures have their focus and fulfillment in Jesus.

[19 : 55] And because they know that, they're able to dig deep into the storehouse of scripture to draw out from it both new and old. They can do what Jesus did.

They can do what we see Matthew doing as he writes his gospel. They can do what Paul will do as he interprets the scriptures. They can bring out from those scriptures both treasures new and old. Now friends, please hear this and consider its implications for us as a congregation. You see, Jesus is saying that he has raised up new leaders of God's people. New leaders of God's people. And who are they? Are they Ezra? No, they're not Ezra. Are they the scribes of Jesus' day? No, they're not the scribes of Jesus' day. No, they are those who have heard and accepted the kingdom.

Who have understood the things of the kingdom explained by Jesus. Those who have come to know Jesus and have entered the kingdom themselves. But they are more. They are those who read and interpret the Bible in the light of Jesus and the kingdom.

[20 : 57] And friends, let me just say today that that is why we do what we do at Holy Trinity. That is what my predecessor, Paul Barker, understood and did. And I understand and do this.

In fact, verse 52 has shaped my thought and my ministry so much that it cannot be underestimated. As God's new leaders, our job is to do what the disciples were to do.

To study the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Our job is to read them in the light of Jesus and the kingdom. Our job, my job is to tell you what God requires on the basis of those scriptures read in the light of Jesus.

And it's to urge you to hear what the kingdom is about. It is to urge you to embrace Jesus by putting your faith in him. It is to instruct you in godliness. It is to do what I can through explaining the scriptures to make sure that you're wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

It is to side with God in helping you to say, yes, I have understood these things of the kingdom. It is to help you to be taught, rebuked, corrected and trained in righteousness by the God breathed scriptures.

[22 : 13] That's why we do what we do. On a Sunday, that's why I do this every Sunday. That's why I spend so much time in my study looking at the passages to try and work out what they are saying. So that I might bring out for them for you, out of them for you, things new and old.

It's to equip you through these scriptures for every good work. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.