

Joy in treasure

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[0 : 00] Your Bibles with you, turn to Matthew chapter 13. As you're turning there, you can think about both this reading and the message upon the reading this morning is similar to a mum making sure that her children have everything they need before they go out the house.

Do you have this? Do you have that? Making sure that they're fully equipped. Have you got your raincoat? Have you got your packed lunch? All of those type of things. As we read this and as we think about the message upon it, this is the kind of impression that I want to give you as you go into the new year.

I want to make sure that you have everything that you need. Now, it's a small list, but it's an important list. So we're going to pick it up in verse 44. So Matthew 13, verse 44.

I'm going to read through to the end of verse 46. So 44 to 46. Here we go. Now we hear God's word.

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.

[1 : 36] 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 bought it.

Very simple. Very simple. We'll come back to that after this next song, but very simple reading and message upon it this morning.

Thank you. If you found it difficult to come to church this morning, this message will explain why perhaps you did, or more importantly, why you're here.

It'll also explain why sometimes people can have a lack of motivation when it comes to the things of God. And as we enter into the new year, I want this to be sort of a message of transition, of going from this year to the next year and making sure that we have everything that we need to go into the new year, to begin it in the right way.

Now God doesn't speak in terms of turning over a new leaf for the most obvious of reasons. Now you may have decided in your own mind that in the new year I'm going to turn over a new leaf or I'm going to make these certain commitments.

[3 : 02] I'm going to encourage you not to do that. Perhaps you made those decisions back in the beginning of December or perhaps even November or even earlier than that.

The reason I'm going to encourage you not to do that is for this very simple reason. One, biblically, God doesn't want us to turn over new leaves for this simple reason. Because if you made the decision to turn over a new leaf at the beginning of November, at the beginning of January, and you've managed to wait a whole two months before you do it, the likelihood is you're not actually going to do it in the month of January.

If you're the type of person that can put something off beginning for two months, then you're the sort of person that can also put something off for a whole year. So last year's new leaf looked just like this year's new leaf or this year's new leaf looks just like last year's or the year before.

Jesus understands that we want to move beyond good intentions, but he also understands how a person moves beyond good intentions. And so for people who instinctively can wait until a certain day fail to realize that that motivation that you expect to turn up on the first of January may not actually turn up on the first of January.

That motivation and encouragement that you're hoping will be there to kickstart the new year may not actually be there to kickstart the new year. Good intentions are good, but good intentions are meant to lead to action.

[4 : 45] These couple of verses here or three verses, 45, 44, 45 and 46, explain how change happens and how life with God continues to happen.

So there are a couple of parables here which we read. The parables are very similar, but they're not identical. And you would notice that they're not identical, but the point is the same.

The parables convey key points and they might even work in the same way a joke does. Now, perhaps at Christmas you took the joke out of the cracker, told it, and everybody creased themselves with laughter.

Or not. Whatever the joke may be. But most of us know how a joke works. You have this build-up and then you have the punchline and the punchline makes sense to the joke and everyone starts laughing or they do if it's funny.

But they only laugh if they get the joke. You ever had that position where you tell a joke and then you're having to explain the joke and it's no longer funny? Well, parables, in exactly the same way, have a punchline.

[5 : 54] They have a key point. And so Jesus tells these two parables. Now, some people will get it and some people won't. And the reason they won't get it has all to do with the level of joy in their heart.

Okay? You will get these two parables totally dependent on the level of joy you have in your heart for Jesus. If your levels are low, then the parables are going to be perhaps easy to understand but not necessarily easy to follow through the intention into a new year.

So these parables pack a punch. Okay? They have their very own punchline and the punchline is searching us to see whether our heart has any joy in it for God at all.

That's how simple it is. So the way we're going to tackle this is look at what Jesus is teaching and then I'm going to tell you what it means. We're going to look at what Jesus is saying and then I'm going to tell you what Jesus is actually saying.

So here's the first thing of four key truths. So there are four key truths in these two parables. Here's the first one. Both the first man who stumbles across the treasure in his field and the second man who goes searching for fine pearls and finds one of great value both recognize the value of what they find.

[7 : 25] There's no difficulty for them to understand that what they stumble across is tremendously valuable. The man who finds the treasure in his field knows that it's valuable. The man who finds the pearl of great price knows that it's valuable.

That's the first thing that they recognize. The second thing that they recognize is that they both want it. Having found the treasure they both want the treasure.

Having found the treasure in the field or the pearl they both want it. They go out of their way even to get it. The third thing to recognize and this is mentioned in the first man but it's implied in the second man there's only one reason why anybody would give up anything.

and that is the joy of the new. So that you'll notice that this man only in his joy does he sell everything that he has to obtain the field full of treasure.

Okay? Only a person who has joy would do something like that. You try and get someone to do something grudgingly. Okay? In fact it's difficult to work with people who do things do I have to?

[8 : 38] Do I really have to? You know I'd much rather well I know you'd much rather do this you can go back to that but please do this first. People who do things grudgingly either do it under compulsion either do it under sort of a level of authority but if left to themselves they would never do it.

If left to themselves they would never do it. They can be made to do it like a parent to a child please no this is what you ought to be yeah but I like playing on the games okay but for five minutes can you do this okay okay now if left to themselves they would never do it.

Now why wouldn't they do it? Well because they have no joy in doing it. Nobody does things that they have no joy in. They may do it because they're made to but if left to themselves they won't.

Very similar to perhaps church in children. Okay? How many are made to come to church and how many want to? Well that measurement that measurement can only be determined at the age when they're free not to.

And if they're free not to and they still come then they come all of their own joy. Okay? That's the point. People who are made to do something it's very hard to determine whether or not they would actually do it of their own volition of their own will out of their own joy.

[10 : 03] It's only when they have the freedom not to do something are you able to determine whether or not they really want to. And the same applies to every single one of us adults. The same thing applies to all of us.

So fourthly thirdly sorry they've both sold everything that they have in their joy. They recognize that everything's worth sacrificing because compared to the joy and the treasure you know I'd give everything away.

Okay? Suddenly it's not worth quite so much. There is no sacrifice that is too great when you come across a great treasure. And then fourthly this is most important they're not willing to lose what they found.

And what that means is is it possible to lose something you don't yet have? Is it possible to lose something you don't yet have? And the Bible says absolutely. People are losing what they don't yet have all the time.

And the way this happens is if this man came to the field full of treasure but he doesn't want to sell everything that he has in real terms he loses the treasure in the field. He can obtain one without losing the other.

[11:18] He cannot get this without letting go of that. And so people who don't want to lose here end up often losing over here. Imagine this as a simple illustration of a young girl learning to play piano.

And her piano lessons just so happens to be at the same time all of her friends are at the park. Exactly the same time. Okay. You're going to lose somewhere.

You're either going to lose the sort of playground time in the park or you're going to miss out on the piano lessons. So sacrifice goes hand in hand with life.

The whole of life contains sacrifice. The issue is what do you sacrifice? What do you have and then what do you go without in order to have that? This is exactly what these parables are teaching here. You cannot make it through life without making sacrifices along the way. And sacrifices are always based on what you're willing to lose. Not what you're willing to get though that's true but more importantly on what you're willing to lose or what you're not willing to lose.

[12:30] I'm going to illustrate this with a man who came to Jesus. A rich man who seemed to have everything youth on his side as well. He was also a man of authority came to Jesus wanting eternal life.

And his question to Jesus was very simple. Jesus what can I do to get eternal life? Now Jesus' answer was sell everything that you have give it to the poor and come and follow me.

Now let me let me just sort of break that down. He didn't get eternal life by selling everything that he had. He gets eternal life by following Jesus. But Jesus puts that before following him because he realizes where the man's heart is.

This man upon meeting Jesus is not full of joy he's only full of sadness. Now why would anybody who wants to come to Jesus who wants eternal life then meets Jesus and whose heart is only full of sadness?

Well it tells us that his heart was sad because he had much. And he didn't follow Jesus because he was unwilling to lose everything that he had. Okay?

[13:41] He was unwilling to lose everything that he had. He didn't get eternal life because he didn't follow Jesus. But the reason he didn't follow Jesus is because he was making his decision based on loss aversion.

When you go into this new year you add up how many decisions you make based on what you don't want to lose. And I can guarantee it will be a whole lot more than the decisions you make to gain something.

A whole lot more. We are almost programmed sinfully might I add to not want to lose. And yet here Jesus is saying come and follow me but nothing else compares to the importance of following me.

And this man instead of being full of joy like the man with the treasure in the field this rich ruler comes to the greatest treasure of all Jesus Christ the greatest treasure of all Jesus Christ and his heart is only filled with sadness.

Why? Because he had much and if he had much he had much to give up and he didn't want to lose what he had. He didn't go home and sell everything that he had.

[14:53] This man goes home sells everything that he had to get the treasure but this man here that comes to Jesus wanting eternal life suddenly realizes that he doesn't want it or he doesn't want it as much as he thinks he wants it.

Now this poses for us a sort of a key principle that people don't necessarily know what they want. People don't necessarily know they think they know what they want up to a point until crunch time

comes and when crunch time comes suddenly their heart is revealed and it's normally revealed in the direction of what they are unwilling to lose.

A person is motivated by what they have what they love and what they want to do. Now when a person truly sees Jesus when a person truly gets Jesus when a person truly has the joy upon meeting Jesus the gospel the kingdom of God then suddenly everything else is not worth keeping. I don't mind what I have to give away. I don't mind what Jesus requires of me in order for me to have Jesus. Okay in my joy I'll give up everything because suddenly I've got Jesus. Jesus is worth more than any sacrifice you could ever make. Okay as you go into the new year I want you to realize that Jesus is worth more than any sacrifice you could ever make.

[16:29] It's something that I have to remind myself constantly that Jesus is worth more than any of the other things that I might want. Jesus is worth more and I also recognize that those other things can get in the way of my Christian life.

Jesus knows that we are motivated by what we know what we love and what we want to do. What we know what we love and what we want to do but what we know and what we love and what we want to do may not be what you think it is.

It just may not be what you think it is. In the same way the rich young ruler came to Jesus wanting him wanting eternal life went away sad because he did not want to lose what he had.

In other words he came to the realization that yes he wanted eternal life but he didn't want it as much as he thought he did. He didn't want Jesus as much as he thought he did.

This means that life is simple but you are complex. Why is life difficult? The reason life is difficult according to Jesus is because you bring your very own complexity.

[17:47] You're the one that makes life difficult not life itself. Jesus doesn't make following him difficult. You make following Jesus difficult. Jesus knows where the complexity is.

It's not found in the simple commands that Jesus has. It's found in the motivations we have or whether or not we want to do it his way or our own way. So people who think they know what they want meet Jesus and suddenly don't actually know what they want.

Jesus keeps it simple. Follow me. Follow me. We don't make sacrifices when it comes to Jesus because we gain so much more.

We gain so much more by belonging to Jesus. Jesus. So our whole life is going to be directed by what we know, what we want, and what we're unwilling to lose.

And some people here are unwilling to lose Jesus. I can do without anything else, but I cannot do without Jesus. I'm willing for anything in my life to change apart from losing Jesus.

[18:57] And that's what these parables search us. They search us to see whether or not we will come up with that answer. Whether or not if everything is stripped away with us, the one thing that we hold on to is Jesus.

Now the reality is Jesus holds on to us way tighter than we ever hold on to him. In fact, he never lets us go. And that's the joy. So let's have a look at this joy just for a moment as a point worth mentioning.

You'll notice that the man in his joy sells everything to obtain the treasure. The man in his joy, verse 44, sells everything to obtain the treasure in the field.

If a person is not filled with joy, then he's unwilling to make any kind of sacrifice whatsoever. Now if a person, if a person gets to Jesus and goes, do I really have to?

Do I really have to give up all of this? All that that tells you is that they don't see Jesus. If a person gets to Jesus Christ and Jesus says, come and follow me, and they go, what?

[20:09] All of that? All that that tells you is that they don't actually see Jesus. In the same way, a mum might say to her son, you know, our teenage son, I'd love you to help me with this, and the son sort of kicks his feet, do I have to?

All that that tells you is that he loves doing what he's doing more than he loves doing what his mum asks him to. Now, that's a hard lesson for both people, but it is true.

It is true. The heart is filled with affection for one thing more than the other thing, and Jesus is about changing the affection of your heart. Jesus is all about making sure that you love God and the things of God more than you love the things of the world.

Why? Because out of that our whole life is motivated. people who know better still do, okay, still do what their heart wants to do. So, even though a son can know that his mum loves him, even though a son can know that his mum is worth more than the computer game, okay, can still be, even

though he knows that intellectually, he can still be ruled by his heart by unwilling to come away from the computer game.

This is what I want to do. You know, leave me alone. Suddenly, even though he knows better, his heart is what dictates his whole life.

[21 : 29] And so, the issue of joy in your heart for God is absolutely essential. Because it is the only thing that will keep us close to God now and in the new year.

Imagine it like this. You're walking along a beach with a handful of pebbles, and they could be beautiful pebbles. And then you come across a pile of diamonds. Huge pile of diamonds. diamonds. Now, in worldly terms, diamonds are worth a lot, but only in worldly terms. They're only worth what their value they are to the people who like diamonds. Now, who of you would keep your handful of pebbles and try and get a few diamonds on top?

Not many. What would you do? You throw away the pebbles in order to pick up the diamonds. Why? Because you instinctively see that the pebbles are worth more than what you're currently carrying. So, this man who gets to this field, this treasure, which is the kingdom of God, which is Jesus, which is the gospel, instinctively knows that this is worth more than anything else that he has.

And so, dropping it's not an issue. Letting it go is not an issue. Let it go. Now that I've met Jesus, I don't care what I have to let go of.

[22 : 42] I don't care. I just don't. Nothing is worth more than what I found. And that's a person that comes to Jesus. A person who truly sees Jesus drops the pebbles.

A person who truly sees Jesus drops everything that he has in order to get Jesus. Because he sees the value and the person who keeps hold and doesn't drop doesn't see Jesus.

The person who keeps hold and doesn't drop it instantly doesn't see the value of Jesus. And so, these parables here seek us out.

They seek us out to see whether or not we have any joy in our heart for Jesus. Because Jesus compared to everything else, it's not even a comparison.

The person who comes to Jesus and sort of weighs his hands up and down and goes, well, Jesus or this? Jesus or this? And sort of metaphorically lifting one hand above the other hand, trying to weigh which is worth more, trying to come to some conclusion.

[23 : 51] Those who think that the comparison between Jesus and the world is close don't actually see Jesus. Those who think that the comparison between Jesus and everything else is a close one, it's a tough battle, don't actually see the value of Jesus.

You haven't truly seen what you have. As we conclude, Jesus put it this way, that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. In other words, Jesus understands that it's not really about what you know, it's more about what you love. It's about what you treasure.

It's about the joy that you have for a particular thing in any given moment. Now, the way that I can illustrate this is by a lady in the Old Testament whose name we don't know.

She's only mentioned as Lot's wife. Now, Lot and his wife were in Sodom and Gomorrah, a place where no good was to be found, and you have to wonder why they were in Sodom and Gomorrah because when the angels turn up, Lot doesn't want the angels to stay in Sodom and Gomorrah.

[25 : 08] Don't stay in the city overnight. Well, I think to myself, why wouldn't you want them to stay in the city that you stay in? Why are you staying in the city?

You don't want anybody else to stay in. It doesn't make any sense. So God, in his grace, leads them out of a city full of sin and vile and everything.

And you know the story that as God was leading them out, he says, don't look back. And do you know what? Lot's wife could not see where God was leading her for one simple reason.

Lot's wife could not see the good blessing in place that God was leading her into for one simple reason. Because she was looking at everything she was leaving behind.

And because she was looking back at everything she was leaving behind, she suffered the consequences of her own heart. And you know how the story ends. All people suffer the consequences of their own.

[26 : 14] Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. That's the thing that motivates you the most. So even when a person knows better, they are still ruled by the joy that they have in their heart for whatever they have in their heart joy for.

This is how Thomas Chalmers put it. He called it, he's his Scottish minister. He called it the expulsive power of a new affection. This is how my atheistic brother puts it. He says it exactly the same way, but it's more ways that you can perhaps understand. My brother Nathan had lots of girlfriends. He's considered to be the best looking one of the family out of the seven brothers.

of course all the other brothers deny it fear but he had lots of girlfriends because he was tall, good looking, good job.

He's just got everything the world could possibly want to give him. He has it all. Sort of a director of a multi-million pound business. I mean, what's not to be jealous of?

[27 : 20] But as he was growing up, he had lots of girlfriends. And this is what he used to say. There's nothing like a new one to get you over the old one. Now, however shocking that may be, the truth behind it is unbelievably biblical.

And here's the truth. That new affections cast out old affections. The danger is, is when it becomes a novelty.

And the danger with novelty is, is that new things don't always last, don't always continue to be new forever. Like children who play with their new toys on Christmas Day and then play with their old toys on Boxing Day.

Right? Right? Yeah. Why don't you just wrap up last year's presents and give it to them again? We learned, and this is what we now do. Okay? We just, you haven't played for that for six whole months, we'll just wrap it up for next year.

Okay? Suddenly you begin to realize. Why? Because new affections, if they're just novelty, only last for a short while. But it is the case with every single body here, that you only give up one thing when something else, when you want something else.

[28 : 38] So a man who gives up smoking might give up smoking only because he wants to become fit. The man who goes on a diet only goes on a diet because he wants to get fit in the gym.

So his new affection for fitness and love and health overtakes his old affections for food and therefore the new affection overcomes the old affection.

Well Thomas Chalmers and Jesus before him said it's exactly the same with him. That when a person meets Jesus Christ, the older but affection, it's the only affection that stays new.

It's the only affection that stays real. It's the only affection that you have that cannot be trumped by any other affection in the world. But when people don't have Jesus, they simply move from one affection of one thing to another affection of another thing.

And their whole life is a series of different loves for different things or perhaps different people. It's a terrible way to live. What Jesus is saying here in this parable is that when you find him, you find the ultimate affection.

[29 : 52] You find the one affection that casts out all lesser affections and in fact make them lesser affections. It doesn't mean that they're worth less in terms of they're not worth anything.

It just means that they're not worth as much as Jesus. So in conclusion, these parables search our heart.

these parables teach us that Jesus, the kingdom, the gospel is worth more than anything else you can find in this world.

Anything else you can find in this world. These parables call us to see the value of Jesus and that when we see the value of Jesus, suddenly dropping everything else is not an issue.

I don't care what I have to give away. Suddenly it's not even a big deal compared to having Jesus. And most importantly this, that your life is not ruled by what you know.

[30 : 53] Your life is ruled by what you love. Okay? Your life is not ruled by what you know. It's ruled by what you love. And that's the thing that you'll always go after.

So, the parables call us to love God as the ultimate affection and the joy of our heart. Amen.

Children, well, may the Lord bless you and keep you all as you enter into a new year with him. Amen.