

## **Introduction**

I like to make my purchases when the prices are their lowest. Who doesn't, right? The other day I bought a pair of shorts for \$4.97. I wasn't shopping for shorts. I wasn't even shopping for clothes, but I happened to see the price. After a double-take, I decided I couldn't pass up the bargain. I can't wear them til next summer, but you just can't do any better than that.

This morning we look at two parables in which the price actually could not be any higher, but those paying the price still saw the transaction as a bargain.

[Read Text; Pray]

The parables in Matthew 13 fit together. Through the first two parables of the chapter, Jesus teaches that the kingdom will ultimately be rejected by many, and those who embrace the kingdom will face adversity. The next two parables (the ones we looked at last week) explain that despite distress and despite being disregarded, the kingdom will not be stopped. It will expand and it will exert an uncontainable influence. The two parables we consider this morning add that those who embrace the kingdom see in it such value that they gladly pay the price of everything they have. I would sum up the message of these two parables as this: "The kingdom of heaven will cost you everything you have; and it is more than worth it."

Let's briefly review the two parables and then turn to consider several critical lessons they teach us.

### **I. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure.**

Back in NT days there were no banks and safety deposit boxes. There were no safes or secure storage facilities. Security for the individual was at a minimum. So in order to protect and secure valuable belongings, people were known to hide them in the ground in an inconspicuous location.

From time to time folks would die with their treasure still buried, or they would just forget about it or even forget where they buried it and there it would be. It was then considered to be part of the land in which it was buried. It belonged to the owner of the land. If a servant found the treasure, he was obligated to tell his master. But anyone else could take possession of the buried treasure by purchasing the land as a whole.

Jesus makes use of that kind of instance to communicate truth concerning the kingdom of heaven. It is comparable to a person who finds such treasure in a field. Knowing he can obtain the treasure for the mere price of the field, he is only too happy to sell everything he has to buy the field. He divests himself of all he owns and buys the field, obtaining ownership of the treasure in the process. For the comparably small price of the land, he obtains treasure of inestimable value.

Years ago, a man took advantage of a great investment opportunity. Because of some extenuating circumstances, some land was being sold at the rock-bottom price of \$200 per acre. The man reasoned he could easily resell the parcel at \$400 and double his money. So he bought the land and at the same time put it up for sale. Within a couple weeks a coal prospector knocked on his door. He had seen the "For Sale" sign on the property and wanted to test it for the presence of coal. If what he suspected was true, the man could realize as much as \$2 million. The man agreed to the test and was present when they drilled. Sure enough they found coal, but the prospector explained it was not enough to provide a sizeable yield.

A few weeks later the man sold the land for the \$400/acre and realized a good profit. After the passing of a month or so, he drove by the property he had sold only to see excavation equipment operating at full capacity. "What can this be?" he thought. It was then he learned that he was duped by the coal prospector. There was after all a sizeable deposit of coal. He was only too happy to have paid the \$400/acre in order to make millions.

Jesus is not teaching that the kingdom of heaven deals in deception. But what he is teaching is that the price of obtaining a place in the kingdom could not be any higher. It will cost you everything. And yet, its true value so far exceeds the price that those who find it are only too happy to pay it.

## **II. The Parable of the Superior Pearl.**

While it would appear that the man in the first parable stumbles over the treasure. The merchant in this parable is engaged in a quest. He is a hunter in search of fine pearls.

In addition the man in the first parable was a man of the field, perhaps a man of low estate. But the merchant is a wealthy man dealing in one of the most costly investments of the day. Pearls were perhaps the most highly valued of gems in NT days. They were scarce and obtained with risk. The imitations that fill today's marketplace were conspicuously absent then. Pearls were worn as the finest of jewelry. Donning gold and pearls was a mark of important status and great wealth. But pearls were also bought and sold as investments.

A merchant dealing in pearls would have to have had a storehouse of wealth. He also would have been in the business of buying and selling. He was not looking for a pearl but for pearls, and for the best of the best. But he bought in order to sell. Buy low and sell high, by all means, but it was his business to buy and sell, not buy and keep.

And yet in Jesus' parable, the merchant comes upon a single pearl of such remarkable worth he sells all he has in order to gain it. You get the idea that the merchant did not buy this pearl to sell it but to keep it. And as rich as he was, he had to sell everything he had to obtain it.

This pearl of great worth, says Jesus, is the kingdom of heaven. Those who truly come to the kingdom will not abandon it. They have found that for which their soul so long has craved. They are satisfied with its beauty and its worth so that they gladly relinquish all else for it and will not give it up because it is worthy to be prized so much!

Now I want you to consider from both of these parables

## **III. The Practical Instruction Concerning the Kingdom of Heaven.**

A. They teach us the value of the kingdom.

In the first parable the kingdom is represented as treasure. In the second it is depicted as a pearl of superior worth. In both cases it is depicted as a

value so great that parting with all else that you possess is small price to pay for what you get.

What do you get? I am going to sum it up with Paul's words to Titus (2:11-13): "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

The hope of every true follower of Christ is that a great day is coming when the glory of God in Christ Jesus will appear. The pearl and the treasure of the kingdom which fuels its citizens with hope is the glory of Christ. The welcome into this glory surpasses everything in all of the realm of being. Its supreme production in our hearts is an uncontainable eruption of praise to God. Listen to Peter in 1 Peter 1:3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

The hope possessed by the citizens of the kingdom is the most valuable possession in the cosmos. The souls of the richest and most famous and most powerful people in the world languish. For a while they fill themselves with the notion that pearls and gold and treasure and financial security provide satisfaction, and alcohol and drugs give lasting pleasure and relief. But they do not.

What can any of these do in the face of death but dull its reality for a moment. What can they do in the time of grief when hopes are shattered and relationships severed? What can they do when human beings appear before Holy God in the day of judgment? John MacArthur writes, "They

cannot heal a broken relationship, give peace to a troubled mind, or forgive a sinful heart. They offer little for the present and nothing for the future.”

Thomas Guthrie, nineteenth century Scottish preacher, spoke eloquently of the value of the kingdom of heaven. He wrote, “In the blood of Christ to wash out sin’s darkest stains, in the grace of God to purify the foulest heart, in peace to calm life’s toughest storms, in hopes to cheer guilt’s darkest hour, in a courage that defies death and descends calmly into the tomb, in that which makes the poorest rich and without which the richest are poor indeed, the gospel has treasures greater far than east or west unfold, and its rewards more precious are than all the stores of gold.”

What are these rewards? Precious cleansing from guilt, possessing a robe of righteousness, indulging in a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Those in the kingdom are blessed with the peace of reconciliation with God and with people, the freedom from the tyranny of the prince of the power of the air, the warmth and delight of being sons and daughters of the glorious holy God who is a benevolent and caring heavenly Father. Love, purity, virtue, and glory! These are the rarest of jewels. These are the treasures of the kingdom. Their worth is incalculable! Such is the worth of the kingdom.

B. These two parables underscore the value of the kingdom, and they also highlight the visibility of the kingdom. It is less than conspicuous. In parable 1 the kingdom is a treasure hidden in a field. In parable 2 it is a superior pearl that a man finds only in the context of searching ceaselessly.

This is not to say that the kingdom of God is not visible in the world. It is a city on a hill. It is made of people who let their lights shine before men. It is not as though people do not see it. But what they see is clouded by the deceitfulness of their hearts and their living with a darkened understanding. How does the man find a treasure that is hidden? How does a merchant who lives to buy and sell see a pearl that is worth so much more than all the others that it is worth keeping? Open eyes. Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven! You must be born from above to be able to see the supreme worth of the kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven may not look like much from a worldly perspective. It is a mustard seed. It is leaven. In our flesh we tend to value more what excites the senses. We are usually prepared and even willing to fork out money for things that appeal on a surface level. We love to buy a new couch, new carpet, a new car. But it is another story if we need a new roof or our foundation needs repair. We can't see those things. We excitedly go and purchase the outward but groan over having to spend money on the inward, unless, that is, we have learned its value. The two individuals in the parables see the value that others miss.

Godliness and righteousness and virtue and patience and glory of God do not appeal to people in their natural state. Because of the condition of man the kingdom is inconspicuous. The fact that so many resist and reject and despise the kingdom does not mean that it isn't valuable. Worth is in the eye of the beholder. Without eyes to see, you will miss it. If you have eyes to see the inestimable value of the kingdom of heaven, thank God. Bless God! If you do not, you should beg God to give you those eyes. Otherwise you will turn away from the greatest bargain in history.

C. So these parables present the value of the kingdom and address the visibility of the kingdom. Thirdly, we see the acquisition of the kingdom. It comes at a very high price. The man in the field goes and sells all he has and buys the field. The pearl merchant does the same. He sold all that he had to buy the superior pearl. It is striking that whether rich or not-so-rich the price is the same. Everything. But this is the demand of those who would follow Jesus.

Is Jesus literally teaching that we must sell our possessions and live without means? No. Not at all. He is teaching though that belonging to the kingdom is the surpassing passion of our hearts. We must relinquish our hold on possessions, on sin, and on self-interest. There are no buts when coming to follow Jesus. Jesus I give you "everything but." I will surely follow you, but first let me. No. No. No. No. To those Jesus says, it is all or nothing. He says, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. John says, if you love the world, the love of the father is not in you. Jesus said, whoever would come after me must deny himself and take up his cross and follow. The rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked

what he could do to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said go sell everything and come follow. He went away sad because he was not willing to part with his stuff.

Some of the things people love are their sins. The lesson here is that without repentance no one will see the kingdom. Those who will not turn away from other things have hearts full of idols, things they love more than God or value more than the kingdom.

The willingness to sell everything to purchase the true treasure is not an indication that our works save us. However, it does indicate that priorities matter. Those that would come after Christ will seek first his kingdom and righteousness.

We also see in the acquisition a moment of transaction. The moment the men made their purchase was the moment the treasure became theirs. There was a point in time at which they came to be in possession of the treasure and not before. Everyone who enters the kingdom must be converted. Some people believe they have always been a Christian. Children may be instructed from an early age about Jesus. And they may absorb and welcome what they are told, but there comes a day for everyone who would enter the kingdom on which the salvation transaction is made. The decision to sell it all to have Christ is not natural. It is not inborn. It must take place in your life or you are not going to heaven. Today have you turned from sin, turned from the world, turned from self to let it all go to him because you value his kingdom over all?

The testimony of the Apostle Paul bears this out. To the Philippians he talks about the rich Jewish heritage he had. From the time he was a baby, he was immersed in Judaism. Circumcised the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee and a zealous persecutor of the church, a portrait of religious perfection. "But," says he, "whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as 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—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”

This is not a higher level of Christianity for you and me to marvel at. This is Christian discipleship 101. This is how you come to Christ. This is how you enter the kingdom. Clinging to nothing else you take hold of Christ.

D. There is one more kingdom lesson you need to see. It is the delight of the kingdom. What a contrast between the man who sells everything to buy the field and the rich young ruler. The ruler went away grieved because he had much. But this man was filled with joy in the selling of his possessions. We also know there was joy in the merchant’s heart because there was a change. Instead of buying pearls to resell he bought the one he would never sell.

I take you back to 1 Peter 1. Living hope sustained those who had come to Christ even in the midst of trials. The trials would test their faith and prove it genuine. This genuine faith, said Peter, is more precious than gold though it also is tested by fire. It results in praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ. He says, “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

## **Conclusion**

The blessed hope is the fuel of joy. It may give me a little inward spark to buy a pair of shorts for \$4.97. Did you come across any really good buys recently? Did it not give you just a little surge of satisfaction?

Have you thought about the absolute giveaway that God offers in his kingdom? Entering the kingdom of heaven is costly. I am not talking about what it cost you. It cost Christ Jesus his life. It cost his becoming the sacrificial lamb of God. It cost him enduring the Father’s wrath. It cost suffering and torture for nothing he ever did. Nothing you can give or do can compare, even relinquishing everything. He gave his life to satisfy a

debt you could never pay. All he asks for all he promises is all of you. It is so much that many are not willing to pay the price. But it is so little compared to the value of the kingdom. Everyone who turns down the offer is a fool. If you have repented of sin and trusted in Jesus, indulge in the blessed hope. Rejoice. If not, I urge you to humble yourself before Jesus Christ at this moment, seeking him and his kingdom above all. You will not be disappointed.