

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44

Halifax: 16 October 2005

It is rather disturbing to look around in our city and in our nation today and to see how few there are that name the name of Christ.

- We are used to judging things in our society by their popularity...
 - If you are going out to a restaurant and there is one that has a lot of people and another that has almost nobody,
 - you will be inclined to think there must be something wrong with the one that has so few customers.
- In the same way, when we look around our city and we see that most people don't have time to bother with the kingdom of God,
 - we are tempted to suppose that there must be something wrong with it.
 - If people prefer the movies to church,
 - and if they have time for television rather than family worship,
 - it shows what they value the most.

This can be disturbing to those who just learning about the kingdom of God...

- They may be inclined to say,
 - “Why is this so unpopular? Is there something wrong with the Kingdom of God? Why do so few people value it?”

I am sure that some of these thoughts must have been going through the disciples minds when Jesus told them the parable of the Hidden Treasure in Matthew 13:44.

- Jesus had told them several parables that had disturbed them and surprised them!
 - They and all the Jews had expected that when the Messiah came, He would be almost universally received!
 - But Jesus had been telling them parables that contradicted that...
 - The parable of the Sower told about many who would reject His word...
 - The parable of the Wheat and Tares shows how there would be many false sons in His kingdom—
 - And while the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven gave the encouragement of growth,
 - they also surprisingly spoke of very small, almost invisible beginnings!

After hearing of this rejection, they might well have wondered,

- “How can it be that so many people will not enter the kingdom of God?”
 - “We always heard that the kingdom would be glorious and desirable—something that everybody would want!”
 - “Is there something wrong with the kingdom?”
 - “Why is it not cherished?”

Now there are many in our day who might be tempted to ask the same thing...

- We do not see many in our city who love this kingdom...
 - There are many who have very little use for it...
 - There are many who profess to know the Lord that are unwilling to die for Him...
 - In fact, they are not even willing to suffer the least inconvenience for Him...
 - If obeying Him puts them into some discomfort, they are very content to compromise...
 - So does this mean that there something wrong with Christ’s kingdom?
 - Why is it not cherished more?

Well here, in the parable of the hidden treasure,

- Jesus explains that the kingdom is indeed precious to those who find it!
 - It is so precious to them that they are willing to joyfully sell all that they have to obtain it!
- The problem in Jesus’ day and the problem in our day is that the great majority have not truly found the kingdom of God...
 - If they **had** found it,
 - they would have rejoiced the way the man in the parable rejoices when he finds the treasure hidden in his field!
 - The story of the hidden treasure shows how everyone responds who truly finds this kingdom.

Consider the story itself...

- You have this man going along about His business.
 - He is not looking for anything—
 - But suddenly he sees something that catches his eye—
 - A treasure, buried in a field!
- It may have been that he was just walking by and saw a bit of it sticking out of the ground...

- or that he was working for someone and discovered the treasure while at work and was afraid the owner would claim it if he made it known...
- but it seems more likely that he was a tenant who was working on the land he had rented—and as he was working the land, he discovered it.
- It was not at all uncommon for people to bury treasures in Israel...
 - It was a way of protecting their possession from theft and from invading armies that often came through as Israel was a virtual battleground.
 - Sometimes, those who buried the treasure be killed or taken into captivity by an invading army and their treasure would be left...
 - Sometimes they might go on a journey and never return...
 - Over the centuries, there were many hidden treasures that had no one to claim them.
- The man in the parable had the blessing of finding such a treasure that the owner of the land did not know about...
 - And it was so valuable in his estimation that he was willing to sell everything to secure the field for himself.
 - He wanted to buy the land to make sure there were no legal wranglings—
 - that the owner would not claim that he had buried the treasure there.

Jesus tells you that the kingdom of heaven is like this treasure!

- I want to focus on three things this morning from this parable...
 - The Kingdom of Heaven is like a precious treasure hidden!
 - The Kingdom of Heaven is like a precious treasure found!
 - The Kingdom of Heaven is like a precious treasure bought!
- First, then,

I. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a precious treasure hidden.

- A. The only reason people don't cherish the kingdom of God is because it is hidden from them.
 1. The only reason that nobody had paid any attention to the treasure in the parable was because they hadn't seen it.
 - There was nothing wrong with the treasure at all!
 - a. Anybody that had seen it for what it really was would have done what this man did—sell everything to buy it!
 - How could they not?

- Here was a treasure that was worth a whole lot more than everything he owned put together.
- b. But to everyone else, this field was just an ordinary field...
- It had some value, but no more than any other field...
 - You could build a house on it or plant crops on it or graze cattle and sheep, but other than that, it was just a field.
 - They were unable to see what this man saw!
 - The real value of this field was hidden from them.
2. This is how it is with the kingdom of God...
- a. People look at it and they say, “What is so special about that?”
- Perhaps you are like that.
 - For you, the kingdom of God is a fine thing—it has some value—
 - but it is nothing particularly special...
- b. What do people see when they see the kingdom of God?
- 1) Well, some look at it as something nostalgic—
- There are the old familiar hymns and the old church that their grandmother went to so faithfully...
 - There is Christmas and all the warm feelings at that time of year...
 - The kingdom is a fine thing, but certainly not something worth selling everything to obtain...
- 2) Others look at it as a useful instrument to try to make a better world...
- It is an institution for helping the poor and for teaching people to be kind and good to each other...
 - It is a place to send children so they can learn to be better citizens...
 - There are other institutions that are just a good...
 - the scouts or a service club...
 - but the kingdom of God is one of these,
 - and as much as it helps to make a better world, it is a good thing.
- 3) Still others make it a little more personal...
- For them, the kingdom of God is a place of unconditional acceptance...

- They say:
 - “I can just feel God’s love at church...”
 - “Worship helps me get through another week.”
 - “It is so good just know that God is there for me...”
- And while this is precious to them—
 - It is not so precious that they would sell everything to obtain it!
 - If the way involves sacrifice and suffering,
 - If it involves being rejected, what is the point of it all?
 - These are the people who constantly adjust what God allegedly says in order to make sure they cause no offense.

TRANS> Each of these classes of people see something of value in the kingdom of God...

- They are not against it, and they may even join the church—
 - But it is not something they are ready to devote everything to!
 - The real value of the kingdom is hidden from them...

B. The problem is that people are blind and cannot truly see the Kingdom.

- There are three things that blind them:

1. First, they are blinded by the glitter of this world.

- a. Have you ever noticed how you hardly ever see the Sun when you go to a big city?
 - It is there, giving heat and light to the whole city, but you don’t notice it because of all the glitter of the city...
 - There are so many things to see,
 - There are people, there are signs, there are display windows, there are cars, there are buildings and cross walks...
 - There are so many “little lights” that you don’t even notice the “great light” in the sky!
 - It is there, and you would die without it, but you don’t pay it any attention.

b. Well that is how the glitter of the world can be compared to the Lord of glory.

- 1) You don’t pay any attention to the Lord of glory because there are so many other things to distract your mind...

- Even though you live and move and have your being in Him,
 - there is that new camera you are thinking about buying...
 - there is that romance that has captured mind...
 - there is that new movie or that book...
 - there is your career...
 - there are your friends—
 - there is breakfast and lunch and dinner to look forward to!
 - there are diapers to change and dishes to wash—
 - there are accounts to balance and purchases to make...
 - there are disputes to settle and problems to resolve.

TRANS> These things have a way of blinding your mind so that you don't even notice the Lord of Glory and His Kingdom...

2) Now I am not saying that all these things are bad...

- Most of them are gifts of God that can be used to serve God and know God...
 - You can give thanks for your food and you can serve God in your daily calling...
 - But too often, we lose our bearings—
 - We forget the purpose of eating and working and reading and playing and having sex and buying and selling...
 - We forget that all these things are to be done for the glory of God and in the enjoyment of Him...
 - And when we forget,
 - these things blind us and keep us from seeing His kingdom.

3) This is one of the reasons it is so important for us to keep the Lord's Day holy...

- God has given us a day that is to be devoted to worship, and on that day, we can get our bearings again...
- We can give thanks to God for all His blessings and set our way to serve Him in all that we do...
 - And I might add that this is also why it is essential to worship God every day in private and family worship...
 - We need to come apart for a while and remember what life is all about.

TRANS> But for many, the glitter of the world consumes them and they cannot see the brilliant light of the Lord...

- The treasure of His kingdom is there and it is far more glorious than all the other things,
 - but they just can't see it because they constantly ignore the Lord Himself.

- 2. The second thing that blinds them is “the god of this world”—Satan...
 - a. In 2 Cor 4, the apostle Paul gives this as the reason why people do not see the kingdom of God.
 - He says:
 - 2 Cor 4:3-4: But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

 - b. This blinding by Satan is the judgement of God.
 - Satan has no authority to act on his own,
 - but it is God who sends him to blind the hearts of men as a judgement against their rebellion.

 - We need to understand that we have all so sinned against God that we justly deserve to be cut off from Him forever.
 - There is no injustice with God if He blinded us all,
 - but He does not blind all...
 - He has mercy on whom He will.

 - c. In His great mercy, God has sent Jesus to save us from His wrath and curse, and He has commanded us to repent and believe...
 - 1) This, of course, is the kingdom of God that Jesus is speaking about in these parables...
 - It is the kingdom of righteousness that He has established in this fallen world for the salvation of sinful men and women...
 - This is the treasure that the man found and sells everything to obtain...

 - 2) But many cannot see this kingdom because Satan blinds their minds...
 - It is these that God leaves under His judgement according to His sovereign will...
 - Just as Israel had to be delivered from the power of Egypt, so we must be delivered from the power of Satan.
 - The gospel is there for them, but Satan blinds them so that they cannot see it.

TRANS> And this blinding by Satan leads us to the third way they are blinded...

3. They are blinded by their own rebellion...

- a. The real problem is that they are willingly blind because deep down in their heart they do not want to serve God!
 - Deep down in their heart, they want to live independently of the true God...
 - They don't want to be established in His kingdom where He is the Lord and they are His servants!
 - To them, that is not salvation, but bondage!
 - They would rather live in Egypt than Canaan!
- b. In Romans 8, Paul said that when we are left as we are—to our natural way—
 - we **cannot** serve God...
 - In verse 7 he says,
 - Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."
- c. Now of course, if you are at war with God, if you are against God,
 - You do not see the value of the kingdom of Christ!
 - Why would you want a kingdom that restores you to God if you hate God and are in rebellion against Him?
 - If someone came and told you that they had provided a way for you to come and serve Osama Ben Laden,
 - you would see nothing desirable in that...
 - Your heart is set against him...
 - Well, in the same way,
 - if your heart is by nature set against God,
 - you can see no value in being restored to God's kingdom because you don't want to be under God's rule—
 - you are trying to avoid Him.

TRANS> If you are in this condition, the kingdom of heaven is like a precious treasure hidden away...

- You can look at the field, but you don't see any special value in it...
- The Kingdom of Heaven is like a precious treasure hidden...

But there is good news!

- Jesus does not stop here!
- It is not only a precious treasure hidden...

II. The Kingdom of Heaven is also like a precious treasure found.

A. If you are a true believer, you have discovered the treasure!

- Every disciple has his own story...

1. The man in this parable found it when he was not looking for it...

a. He was just going along about his business and then he saw this treasure!

- He did not expect to find such a thing!
- He did not go on a long quest.
- He was just doing his work and there it was.

b. I have a friend like that...

- He was working on a house and country preacher came on the radio—
- Now this friend had studied religion at Berkley in California under Paul Tillich. He was an intellectual.
- He thought it would be fun to listen to this country preacher...
 - But after the sermon was over, he could not forget it.
 - He stayed up at night sweating about his soul!
 - The preacher's text was John 6 where Jesus feeds the five thousand and everybody goes away except the disciples...
 - Jesus asks them, "Will you go away also?"
 - And Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life."
 - My friend could not get those words out of his mind!
 - After hearing that sermon, he knew **he** had no place to go.
 - He saw the kingdom of God!
 - He could find no rest until he had purchased that field!
 - His wife thought he was crazy and left him.
 - Today he is a humble Christian who loves the kingdom of God.

c. There are people who find the kingdom like this when they are not particularly looking for it...

- There is one who grows up in Christian home and who never really sees the kingdom until one day the lights come on...
- There is another who goes into serious rebellion and wanders far from the Lord, but then is stopped in his tracks the way the apostle Paul was on the Damascus road...
- And yet another who lives in a place where the gospel is not known. A missionary comes and immediately he sees the kingdom and receives it with joy!

TRANS> These are the ones, like the man in this parable, who see the kingdom when they are not looking for it...

2. But I should also mention that there are those who **do** look for it and find it at the end of a long search...
 - That is the situation to which Jesus refers in the next parable—
 - the parable of the pearl of great price...
 - The man in that parable has been on a long search...
 - He could settle for nothing until he found the kingdom of God...
 - and when he finds it, he recognises it with great rejoicing.

TRANS> I will have more to say about this next week,

- but understand that there are many different ways to find the kingdom.
 - the important thing is that you have found it!
 - that you have come to see what so many do not see:
 - The tremendous value of Christ's Kingdom!

B. It is supernatural work when you see this kingdom!

1. God opens your eyes to see what you could not see before!
 - a. You can say with John Newton,
 - "I was blind, but now I see!"
 - b. I don't mean to say that everybody has to have a dramatic conversion experience!
 - It doesn't matter whether you can mark the time that you began to see the value of kingdom of God...
 - All that matters is that you can see its value today!
 - You didn't have to see the sun come up this morning (or know what time it came up) to see it now.

2. How does God open your eyes?
 - a. I showed you before that we are all:
 - blinded by the glitter of this world,
 - blinded by the God of this world,
 - and blinded by our own rebellion...
 - b. Paul tells us that He causes the light to shine in our hearts...
 - Just after Paul tells us that the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, he speaks of what has happened to you who do believe...
 - 2Co 4:6: For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 - God causes you to see the truth of the gospel...
 - It was there all along, but he enables you to see it.
 - c. And He does this by what we call effectual calling.
 - Effectually calling is something God's Spirit does in you.
 - It is a very full work that involves changing your heart so that you want to see the treasure...
 - This work is described by the prophets as:
 - "taking away your stony heart and giving you a heart of flesh—a heart that responds to God..."
 - as causing you to delight God and His ways from within.

TRANS> How thankful you should be if you can see the value of God's kingdom!

- You have found the treasure because God has revealed it to you!
- He has caused the light of the glorious gospel to shine in your heart that was once blind and dark!

C. And what do you see in this treasure?

- "What is your beloved more than *another* beloved?"
1. You see in Him and His glorious kingdom the full remission of sins!
 - a. Before you see the beauty of Christ, you first see your dreadful condition as a sinner, condemned by a holy God!
 - You see the vanity of your own life, the emptiness, the filthiness...

- You see that you are sentenced to eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God, and to most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in Hell fire forever.
 - You see that this is what you deserve apart from God's mercy...
 - You see this because you see something of the excellent majesty and glory of God in His holiness and perfection!
 - You see what you are before Him!
 - You are shut up to an eternity of misery for your sins!
- b. And when you see this, there is nothing so valuable as the forgiveness of sins!
- When you see that the Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven in order to pay the penalty of sin for all who would believe!
 - and that He actually stood between the wrath of God and His people so that all of God's judgement fell upon Him...
 - there is nothing as precious as this that you could even imagine!
 - Here is a way to have your sins forgiven!
 - You can hardly believe that there is such a treasure to be found!
 - But there it is...
 - You have found it! hidden in the field!
 - In this kingdom,
 - all your guilt is taken away!
 - There is no condemnation for you in Jesus Christ!
- c. What price could you put on this treasure?
- There is nothing so precious as the forgiveness of sins!
 - No one who truly comes to grips with what this is—who finds this marvellous treasure—can bear to be without it!
 - It is impossible to find this and not do whatever it takes to have it!
2. And not only that, but this kingdom also holds the promise of true paradise!
- a. It promises the resurrection of the body...
- This mortal will put on immortality... there will be no more sickness, no more suffering, no more injuries, no more pain or disorder of any kind...
 - Just think how much people value better health in this world and how much they will spend for it!
 - Here is the promise of perfect health forever!

- No wonder that man was willing to sell all to obtain this treasure!
- b. It also promises you a new heart that delights in God's ways—and that grows into His ways more and more...
- It promises that you will attain perfection so that nothing is wrong with you...
 - It is miserable to have all this selfishness and pride...
 - this lack of self control so that we cannot do what we want...
 - this lack of joy and lack of love for others...
 - especially this lack of love for God!
 - But the promise of the kingdom is that all this will be dealt with!
 - We will become all that Christ is and all that God wants us to be!
- c. It promises us a city in which righteousness dwells—where there is no lying, no greed, no immorality, no selfishness, no idolatry—
- nothing but perfect love between person and person and between God and us!
 - It will be a city with no shortages and no disappointments...
 - A city with no war and no threat of war...
 - A city of perfect peace where everyone will live to please his neighbour under God...
- d. Above all, it is a kingdom in which we will behold God in all His glory!
- We will see Him as He is and we will delight in Him!
 - There will be no boredom—none of that empty feeling—of that lack of fulfilment and purpose...
 - It will be a place of absolute undivided happiness!

TRANS> This is the treasure that every true believer discovered when God opened His eyes!

- It is a treasure hidden that He has found!
- What will he do now that He has discovered so great a treasure?
 - Well that brings us to the third thing our Lord shows us about this treasure...

III. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a precious treasure bought.

A. As soon as you see this treasure—though you only see it in part—you must have it!

1. The man in the parable does the only reasonable thing he could do when he finds the treasure...
 - He sells everything he has so that he might purchase the field where this treasure is buried.
 - Because he knows the value of this treasure, he is willing to give up all that He is...
 - And you can tell that he does not do this with a martyr's complex!
 - He is not counting his losses and bemoaning the fact that he has to part with so much...
 - No, he is giving up a mud puddle for an ocean!
 - He is giving up what cannot keep to obtain what he cannot lose!
 - He is not the least bit distressed about this transaction!
 - Jesus says that is for joy over the treasure that he sells all that He has.
2. And so it is for the one who discovers the kingdom of Jesus Christ!
 - a. He gladly forsakes everything for this kingdom.
 - He realises that this treasure is not something he adds on to the treasures he already has...
 - It is not just another treasure to add to his collection...
 - No, this treasure is a **replacement** for all the others.
 - It is not one precious thing among many,
 - but it is the only precious thing.
 - It takes the place of everything else so that nothing else is dear to him but living in this kingdom.

TRANS> But how is it that this treasure is said to be bought?

- b. When it comes to the kingdom of God, it is not that you pay for it in the sense of purchasing it...
 - 1) It is rather that up until now, your whole life has been lived as if you are the owner of everything—
 - In your mind you would say:
 - “It is my life, my morals, my job, my house, my money, my friends, my family, my way of dealing with problems, my time...”
 - But when you enter God's kingdom, then your life is given to Him...

- He becomes the Lord of your work, the Lord of your possessions, the Lord of your friendships, the Lord of your time, the Lord of your problems and how you deal with them...
 - Everything now has reference to Him as your new Master!
- 2) And so there is a purchase in the sense that you give up everything you possess for Him...
- That is what salvation is all about!
 - It cures you of your wretched independence and puts you under God again—
 - to belong to your creator, to serve Him, to live for Him!
 - You see, apart from Him, you are in that wretched state where you are living off Him and are constantly sustained by Him...
 - Yet you are living in defiance and rebellion.
 - When Jesus brings you into God's kingdom, He brings you back under the rule of God again...
 - Not perfectly at first—
 - But your whole direction or your orientation is entirely changed from self to God...
 - You are crucified with Christ and are raised to walk in a whole new life as the servant of God...
 - You who once served sin, now live for righteousness.
 - This is now your goal, and when you get to heaven, this goal will be reached.
- c. Even your own achievements must be now counted as dung that you may gain Christ.
- His righteousness is so superior, that even all the goodness you once prided yourself in must be cast away as garbage...
 - You leave everything to have this treasure...
 - You empty all the pollution out of your life—all the corruption—to make way for Christ.
 - You put off the old man and put on the new man!

TRANS> So you see that you do not purchase the kingdom in the sense of paying for it,

- but you purchase it in the sense of leaving the old kingdom in order that you might enter this new kingdom that is far better!

- You judge God's kingdom to be the most valuable thing of all—
 - to be under God's rule through Christ is to you, the most important thing of all—

B. But you must not suppose that the sacrifice is only theoretical...

- It is not—it is something you actually do when you truly come into God's kingdom.
 - It is not merely the kind of sacrifice a person might make once in a lifetime—
 - when an angry king demands that you worship his golden image or be thrown into a fiery furnace...
 - It is the sacrifice you make daily—
 - You take up your cross daily and follow Jesus because you want to be under His rule rather than under the rule of another...
 - If you are not taking up your cross daily,
 - what makes you think you would do it when a big matter arises?
 - If you make excuses and compromises about all the little things,
 - you will do the same for the big things...
- Let me give you some examples of the everyday sacrifices I am talking about.
 1. If my child wants to play hockey, but tryouts for the team are on Sunday,
 - I will forsake hockey because I prefer to be under the rule of Christ.
 - I won't say, "but it is only a little thing," because serving Christ is the only thing.
 2. If my parents are going to be angry with me because I will not go to their idolatrous church,
 - I will prefer to be under Christ's rule than to keep peace with my parents.
 - I won't say, it is only once a year what will it hurt?
 3. If my employer tells me that I must learn to lie if I want to get ahead,
 - I will refuse because I will prefer to be under Christ's rule than to rise in this world.
 4. If I am looking for a house and find the perfect house—
 - but purchasing it will mean that I can't tithe—
 - I will choose to tithe because I will prefer to be under Christ's rule than to have the perfect house.

5. If I am a father, and I have come to believe reformed doctrines,
 - but my teenage son does not want to go to the reformed church because he has friends at the other churches,
 - I will choose go to the church I believe to be right rather than appease my son.
 - As the head of your home, your policy must be that you love God first—
 - Your policy must be that doing His will comes before everything else.
 - If you don't do this, you teach your children that what God says (being under His rule) doesn't really matter.

6. If I am a parent who believes that my children ought to have a Christian education,
 - I will make whatever sacrifices are necessary to make that happen—
 - I will give up my leisure to work an extra job or do whatever it takes...
 - And corresponding to that, if I go to a church where there is a widow who cannot educate her own children or afford to send them to a Christian school,
 - I will see what I (and the other members) can do to help her out.

Conclusion

- In this parable Jesus tells you how to determine if you really have seen the value of His kingdom...
 - He has shown us in the other parables that there are many who seemingly come into His kingdom, but whose true allegiance is elsewhere...
 - And here, in this parable, he shows you what you will do if you truly see the value of His kingdom...
 - You will sell everything that you might have it!

- I am grieved because I see so many Christians today that have other allegiances.
 - For them, hating your father and your mother, your wife and even your own life is purely theoretical.
 - It is not something they do each day...
 - And there can only be one reason for that!
 - They have not truly seen the kingdom of God.
 - They have not seen the value of this kingdom.

- I urge you all to look at the kingdom of Christ and see what a treasure it is!

- Jesus Christ brings you into the favour and grace of God for all eternity!
 - What could compare with this?
 - How can you justify holding on to anything that keeps you away from this magnificent kingdom?