
The Kingdom and its Worth

Matthew 13:44-58

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We all have our treasures:

Some are easy to see because we pursue them so hard...

Some are harder to detect because they are a good thing that has now become an idol...

Some are hidden deep in the heart and sometimes do not surface much...

Some are open and held with the hand of grace and a glad heart so that what we are pursuing is heaven and Jesus and the glory of God.

In these closing paragraphs, it is entirely appropriate that Jesus shows us the unmeasurable worth of His kingdom and how we ought to treasure it.

The crowds have plenty to think about. Since the coming of Jesus the field is not empty. The tree is growing. The dough is rising, even though its effect is at present small and hidden. How will they choose? For him or against him?

Responding to the Kingdom (v.44-49)

Parables are both hiding and revealing, concealing and uncovering. These last three parables are not interpreted for us. These were given to the disciples away from the crowd. But let us see what Jesus was saying and Matthew is telling us.

Weighing its Great Value (v.44)

These two parables go together. Both stress the incalculable value of the kingdom: it is worth any sacrifice. Both stress the cost of gaining it: it will cost all we have.

⁴⁴ “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.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The parallels between these two parables are shown their similar structure. They both begin, “The kingdom of heaven is like ...”, and they both end with the same action described with slightly different words. In the first, the man goes and sells all he has and buys the field. In the second, the man went and sold all he had and bought the

pearl that he had found. In both, there is joy in both at the discovery. (Adapted, O'Donnell, p.380-381).

The kingdom of heaven then is a treasure worth giving up everything to obtain. Is this how we think about it? Can we say, "I want to follow Jesus even if it means persecution or poverty because it means citizenship in the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven is truly gospel gain.

To most people in the world the kingdom of heaven is hidden. But God moves to disclose it to them. He enables them to recognize its value. To those then who search for it, find it, and take hold of it despite the cost, it is worth it.

One writer beautifully summarized all these parables in terms of the gospel: "Gospel growth says to us, 'Don't be discouraged. The gospel has grown, it is growing, and it will continue to grow until harvest-time.' Gospel judgment says to us, 'Don't be less gracious than God. God will eradicate evil, but first he wants people to repent, find the kingdom, and embrace the King.' Gospel gain says to us, 'The kingdom of heaven is worth infinitely more than the cost of discipleship.' Such sacrifice is worth it, for it will bring eternal blessedness (shining-like-the-sun blessedness!) when the King of the kingdom comes again to gather the good fish, the fruitful wheat, and all those beautiful birds nesting on the branches of that once tiny mustard seed."

The kingdom of heaven is a treasure so immeasurably precious that for anyone to obtain it they must be willing to give up for it whatever could interfere with having it. It is the supreme treasure that fills us with joy. It is so great a treasure that you will be filled with great joy. The kingdom and its great King fully satisfy the needs of the heart. It brings all we truly need and could ever want.

Is the King and His kingdom your supreme treasure?

Heeding its Warning (47-50)

In every invitation to respond to Jesus in the gospel, there also comes a warning to heed.

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This parable, like the rest in this set, is addressed to Jesus' disciples, whether those with whom He is speaking or the ones to whom Matthew is writing. He is not speaking to the crowds. Jesus is both warning and explaining about how the kingdom will be responded to over the age.

This parable is similar to the parable of the wheat and tares. The focus here is not on growth, but rather as an explanation of the mixed nature of the kingdom. The

kingdom here on earth will be filled with all sorts of people who respond to it. They are gathered in the big net of Commissioned ministry. But at the end of the age, the Lord will sort it out. It reminds us that sometimes we know and sometimes we don't know who really are the true disciples of Jesus. While we are to be discerning and certainly exercising discipline, there will be a day when the false professors in the church will be exposed, judged, and cast into hell.

Have you truly believed the gospel and bowed to Jesus, to the King?

Responding to the Word (v.51-52)

Jesus follows now with an important question.

⁵¹ "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." ⁵² And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Gaining in Basic Understanding (v.51)

Jesus' question is meant for them to answer themselves. Like many of Jesus' questions it is not for information but for self-revelation. Jesus wants them to self-confess whether they have grasped what He was teaching in the parables. It may be wider and larger than that. Have they understood all these things from the Sermon on the Mount till this point? Have they understood what Jesus was teaching about the character, conduct, cost, and consequence of the His kingdom?

They seem to be confident that they understand. They have a rudimentary apprehension. I think Matthew intends for us to smile knowingly at their answer. They think that they have been given the key to interpret the parables. It seems that they do not yet understand that they need a person, that is, the Holy Spirit to bring them to a full understanding. The next chapter is going to dramatically challenge them as to whether their understanding has prepared them for the cost.

The disciples believe they do understand. But Matthew is probably being a little ironic given what Jesus says next.

Growing through Deeper Study (v.52)

I want to pause and look very carefully at this sentence, this response of Jesus.

"Therefore, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Jesus draws a conclusion from the disciples' answer to His question. "Therefore", means that since they understand all these things, then there is more to understand through deeper study. What was clear on the surface of what Jesus was teaching also has greater depths and wider meaning. This principle is critical to understanding the Old Testament. Yes, we can understand what is being said. But there is more there.

Who will be able to do this digging? Jesus calls them "A trained scribe." Scribes were an important part of the Old Testament religious life. They served an important task

in Judaism. They were the first line of copying, interpreting, and understanding the Scriptures. But we have often seen them condemned alongside the Pharisees. What had gone wrong with them? Why would Jesus seem to commend a well-trained scribe?

The problem is that the scribes in Judaism were well trained in the text and in the Mosaic Law. But they were not well trained for the Kingdom of Heaven. But someone who studies the Word and is prepared to understand God's kingdom, they will be able to understand more of what Jesus was bringing in the kingdom.

Jesus says that this person, who is able to dig into the Word and is prepared to understand the Bible the way God intended will be like a rich owner of a household. Jesus refers to him as "A master with many treasures." This person has many treasures. He has deep riches. Where are those riches? They are in the Word of God. This person now is able to bring out all kinds of treasures through their study.

There are great treasures in the Word of God. Some are old and some are new. For the disciples and for the New Testament church, the Bible was suddenly a rich storehouse of wonderful treasures. They were there for the digging. When we truly understand what God's kingdom is about, then the Bible opens for us in wonderful ways.

Jesus is this trained scribe. He is the amazing master of the treasure house. His understanding of the Kingdom has unpacked all the old and new treasures in Sermon on the Mount and through the parables. The disciples may understand what He has taught, but there are ever greater treasures to be uncovered.

How are you responding to going deeper into the Word?

Responding to Jesus, the King (v.53-58)

Here is the point in it all. How will people respond to Jesus?

⁵³ And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, ⁵⁴ and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." ⁵⁸ And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

The Teaching of Jesus (v.53-54a)

Jesus returns to His hometown. This is not Capernaum, but rather Nazareth. This is the place where He grew up in His parent's home. People knew Him as family. They knew His carpentry work. Certainly, some had a door, a wheel, a table that had been built or repaired by Jesus.

Jesus went to the synagogue to teach. This was on the Sabbath (see Mark 6:2 and Luke 4:16). Matthew is not so concerned about the day, but the locale. He is in the gathering

place of religious Jews who wanted to hear the Word of God taught. What would this teaching be like? It would be exactly what was described. It would be the digging out of treasure after treasure of truth and insight. It would be showing how the Old Testament was being fulfilled right before their very eyes. It would be insight after insight into the kingdom of God.

The Response to Jesus (v.54b-57a)

How would they respond? They were astonished. They were offended. Both words capture the response. They were surprised, shocked. They could not understand how He could teach what He taught and do the miracles He did. They thought somehow it was presumptuous. They knew His family. His own brothers did not believe His claims or follow Him. Why should they? They were repelled by Jesus. His grandiose claims and His humble origins were enough to reject Him.

The Explanation by Jesus (v.57b-58)

Jesus' explanation is an idiomatic statement that can be taken two ways. Both are true.

A prophet should be and expects to be honored in his own hometown and household. He may be rejected everywhere else, but he expects to be respected at home.

A prophet is not honored or respected in his own hometown and household. He may be accepted everywhere else, but not there.

If spoken in the synagogue with the townspeople and His Family around, this is the second time He has had something pointed to say to them.

Matthew is pointing us to Deuteronomy 18:15–19:

¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— ¹⁶ just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ ¹⁷ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

Jesus is this prophet. He has been raised up by God. He is the fulfillment of what Moses foreshadowed. He is the one who will speak for God. He must be heard and received. If they reject Him and His words and works, then God Himself will bring an accounting.

Because of their unbelief, Jesus did no mighty miracles there. There are consequences for unbelief. How sad that in Jesus' own hometown, He was rejected And, they were rejected.

How do you respond to Jesus, to Who He is and What He is doing?

Reflect and Respond

The Apostle Paul reflects on how the King and His kingdom is a priceless treasure to him in Philippians 3:7-11 (NLT).

I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

The magnificent value of *knowing Christ*...

How have these three parables challenged us?

- Is the King and His kingdom your supreme treasure?
- Have you truly believed the gospel and bowed to Jesus, to the King?
- How are you responding to going deeper into the Word?
- How do you respond to Jesus, to Who He is and What He is doing?

Finally, a word to Christians...

Have you taken the call to discipleship seriously? Could your casual approach to church, to community, to ministry, to the Word, to people be evidence, not that you are immature, but that you are simply an unbeliever?

Jesus is not calling you to a life of spiritual ease and comfort. He has called you to live a sacrificed life. Do you?