

Hidden Treasure and a Pearl of Great Price

Matthew 13:44-46

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
8/28/2016*

Hidden Treasure and a Pearl of Great Price

Matthew 13:44-46

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:44-46).

Preface

Jesus has been teaching about the nature of the growth of the kingdom of God. He has been doing this through parables. A parable (*parabole*) comes from the two Greek words παρά [para] which means ‘with’ or ‘by’ and βάλλω [ballo] meaning to cast or throw. It’s the idea of throwing two things together thus making a parallel story. We might call it an analogy or an allegory of sorts.

In the *Parable of the Sower* we learned that the heart of the growth of the kingdom is the message – the sowing of seeds. And it shouldn’t surprise us to see that some reject the message and others appear to receive it yet find themselves lured away due to tribulation or temptations. In the *Parable of the Wheat and Tares* we learn that the kingdom will have a mixture of good and evil. We find we are not in an entirely safe environment.

In the *Parable of the Mustard Seed* we learn that the growth of the kingdom is gradual but sure. In the *Parable of the Leaven* we learn that the kingdom will permeate every aspect of life and culture. In the two parables we’ll look at today Jesus moves from discussing the kingdom of God as a corporate entity to very personal responses. The *Hidden Treasure* and the *Pearl of Great Price* tells us of those who come to realize the value of being a citizen of the kingdom of God.

Hidden Treasure

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Matthew 13:44).

Since first century Palestine didn't have banks as we know them, it was not uncommon for people to hide their valuables in the ground. With all the loot from the many wars that had taken place in that region there is little doubt that Jesus' audience had heard stories of people who had purchased fields containing some of that loot. According to Jewish law, the proceeds became the possession of the buyer. Considering the general poverty of Jews under Roman rule, such a find would change a person's life forever – like winning the lottery.

Jesus seizes this buried treasure dream to make a point about the kingdom of heaven; a person who finds it will gladly be willing to sell everything he has to have it. He doesn't respond like the rich young ruler who becomes very sad because he has numerous possessions (Matthew 19:22). No, this man evaluates what he has, weighed against the value of the treasure in the field, and it's no contest.

Truly this level of commitment requires the grace of God. It is certainly not found in the nature of man to joyously make this transaction.

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God (Romans 3:10, 11).

Yet Jesus speaks of a man who is willing to sell all he had for the sake of the kingdom of God. Let us never underestimate the power of the grace of God when examining our own conversions. May we ever worship God that He has given us eyes to see the treasure; the Greek word for "found" *heurisko* (εὕρισκω – where we get the word eureka) likely means to unexpectedly find.

It's a hidden treasure. It is not seen by the natural eye. But when one is given eyes to see, they recognize that it is more valuable than the aggregate of all human possessions. And the living God requires no less than a full commitment to the source of all that is good and right and true. And those who, by the grace of God, have truly found this treasure do not hesitate to trade what they cannot keep in order to gain what they cannot lose.

Pearl

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it (Matthew 13:45, 46).

This similar parable has its subject demonstrating the same full commitment. There are some distinctions worth noting:

Searching

Instead of the pearl being found by accident, as with the treasure, it is found by someone seeking pearls. Some people aren't looking at all for answers and truth. Some just meander through life void of such philosophical pursuits. God comes upon them like an unexpected change in the weather; before they know it, it's raining and they've been baptized.

This was the case with me. I was a relatively content unbeliever who was gently and lovingly confronted with the gospel and found myself a believer.

Others are searchers. This man may have had a bag of pearls yet he still searches. He's tried all the religions, all the philosophies, all the disciplines yet he is still lacking. His pearls rattle in their sack taunting him, reminding him of his failure. Perhaps one more pearl will complete his collection and he will have finally achieved contentment...his journey will be over.

One Pearl

But Jesus teaches that it is not a collection of pearls at all but one (*hena—ἓνα*) pearl. He doesn't add this pearl to his collection but rather sells all that he had (which would have included the other pearls) in order to purchase the one pearl of great price.

A wife is not to be thought of as an addition to the man's harem. Neither is Jesus to be thought of as an addition or compliment to my ever evolving world view. Such a method leaves man as God and God as a mere tool in man's utility belt.

Therefore know this day, and consider *it* in your heart, that the Lord Himself *is* God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; *there is no other* (Deuteronomy 4:39).

In some weddings the phrase, “forsaking all others” is used to describe the unique and exclusive priority given to the spouse. As the bride of Christ we are called to a similar commitment.

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:33).

This does not mean we dismiss all relationships, but it does mean that all relationships are now seen through a transformed set of eyes.

When a Christian sanctifies God as Lord in his heart (1 Peter 3:15) all of our behavior is modified and brought into faithful subjection to the wisdom of God. Anything less, James teaches, is double-minded and unstable (James 1:8). Jesus taught that no one can serve two master for he will love one and hate the other (Matthew 6:24).

A Glorious Promise

A glorious promise from God is that the person truly seeking Him will find Him.

I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me (Proverbs 8:17).

This can only mean that those who say they are seeking, yet not finding, are not truly seeking at all.

Some are not seeking at all yet find God (Romans 10:20). Others say they are seeking but merely want a caricature of God to help them establish a righteousness of their own (Romans 10:3). Others are seeking but find something far different and more valuable than what they were originally looking for. Whatever the scenario, there are two things in common in these parables:

Unparalleled Value

First, there is the God-given prudence to recognize the unparalleled value of the treasure. Have you the eyes to see the matchless glory of the kingdom of heaven? Would you cast yourself in the arms of its all-powerful yet benevolent, sacrificial King that He might presents you before His own Father holy and your own Maker spotless and without blemish?

How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. ⁸ They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. ⁹ For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light (Psalm 36:7-9).

Purchasing the Kingdom

Second, there is a willingness to sell all and purchase. Would you trust in Christ for peace with your soul or would you cling to the mundane trinkets and philosophies of a lost and dying world? Would you sell all you have?

But what does it mean to sell everything and buy the kingdom? Is it for sale? Is it possible to slam down a payment on the counter of heaven leaving God with an obligation? Is God to be thought of as a cosmic vendor? Certainly not! God will never be in debt to man.

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. ⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Romans 4:4, 5).

It is faith alone in Christ alone which justifies (pardons) the sinner and grants him true citizenship in the heavenly kingdom. So why do the parables of Christ present this transaction as a purchase? Perhaps because a true God-given faith is active. These parables present no sluggish faith. Luther taught that we are saved by faith alone but saving faith is never alone.

We have nothing to lay upon the counter of heaven except our own sins, which are capable of purchasing for us nothing but judgment, for the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Nonetheless Jesus uses the illustration of a *purchase* that we might not view our roles in His kingdom as something static but active from the very inception.

Jesus did not encourage the Laodiceans to be lethargic or complacent when it came to hiding the shame of their own nakedness. They were to purchase from Him.

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see (Revelation 3:17, 18).

But it was not merely after the incarnation that these words were uttered by Christ. Through Isaiah the Triune God uses similar language. But notice *who* buys, *what* they buy and what they *lack* in the transaction.

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. ² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. ³ Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you – The sure mercies of David (Isaiah 55:1-3).

Who is invited to buy? All who thirst. What are they purchasing? Food, wine, milk...everlasting life. What do they lack? Money. They have no purchasing power. The passage continues.

Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:6, 7).

Trade In Your Sins

Those who would purchase from God are those who would forsake their wicked ways. The question goes something like this: Are you willing to trade your sins? Will you bring your iniquities (wickedness), which lead to death, to the counter, to the mercy seat of God, and receive in its place the righteousness of Christ which yields life everlasting?

Two Last Points

Two last points I would like to make, if it is not clear already: God cannot be bought off, and Jesus isn't calling men to be monks.

When Jesus talks about selling all and purchasing the kingdom, He is not suggesting that God can be bought off – I think this point has been made. It is also important to recognize that He is not advocating monastic isolationism. He is not saying we should abandon all possessions and become beggars. So what are we selling?

He is speaking of a willful abandoning of those possessions or actions which prove injurious to our spiritual welfare and things in defiance to the law of God.

Christians are called to have one true treasure (Matthew 6:19-21) and confess one true Master (Matthew 6:24). Even when we acknowledge this, we will find ourselves to be, at best, unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10) who stand in continual need of God's love and grace. But to those who altogether disdain the counsel of Christ...the Proverbs teach,

He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding. ³³ The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility (Proverbs 15:32, 33).

May God grant us all this wisdom and humility.

Questions for Study

1. What's a parable (Page 2)?
2. How would a person have such high value of the kingdom of God (page 3)?
3. What significance is there in the idea that it is a 'hidden' treasure (page 3)?
4. How valuable is the kingdom (page 3)?
5. What are some of the differences between the parable of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price (page 4)?
6. Why does Jesus mention 'one' pearl (pages 4, 5)?
7. What is a glorious promise of God (page 5)?
8. Discuss the two things these parables have in common (pages 5, 6)?
9. How does one come to purchase the kingdom of heaven (pages 6-8)?
10. Are Christians called to be monks (page 8)?