

August 21, 2011
Pentecost 10

"Jesus' Kingdom of Love Your Greatest Treasure"

MATTHEW 13:44-52

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; 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; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.⁴⁷ 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out 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 ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
⁵¹ 'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' ⁵²And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.

During our recent vacation we were hiking on a trail in the Eastern Sierras. Suddenly we were surprised by something on the trail. It was not a bear, or mountain lion, or rattlesnake. It was a little boy, about 3 years old, all alone. He was wearing glasses, looked warm and sweaty, and appeared to be lost. We asked where his mommy and daddy were and he said, "At home." Then we asked what he was doing and he said, "Looking for treasure." As we wondered what to do with this lost child, the father came running up the trail. He was so thankful to find his son who had somehow run ahead of him.

The little fellow was looking for treasure. He is no different from every person born into this world. Everyone is looking for treasure, whether it is money, or pleasure, or good relationships with people, or just inner peace and joy. We are all searching for something. The great church father Augustine said that the people do not find rest until they come back to God who made them. The Christian philosopher and apologist Francis Shaffer writes in his book "Death in the City" that people hunger for beauty, or answers to questions, or moral realities. Then he points out that the greatest hunger people have is to be loved. We long to be loved and accepted by people close to us in our family, other kids in school, neighbors and friends. The deepest longing we have in life is the deep seated longing to be loved and accepted by God in this life and for all eternity. Radical Muslims sincerely believe with all their hearts that Allah will love them and accept them if they blow themselves up with bombs in an act of terrorism. Martin Luther tortured his body with the hope that he could find the greatest treasure in life, acceptance and love from God.

The greatest treasure in the world is to know that I am loved by God and that I am part of his Eternal Kingdom, not because of anything I have done, but because of what Jesus has done to rescue me and save me. My greatest treasure is to be able to say with absolute certainty, "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want." Or to say with absolute certainty, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so." Or to say with Martin Luther after he discovered this greatest treasure, "Christ has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature...that I should be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in

everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. Let's listen to our Lord Jesus as he tells us parables or stories to help us treasure his kingdom of love as our greatest treasure in life.

Treasure your gift of love in Jesus' kingdom

Jesus compares the blessings of God's kingdom to a man finding a treasure in the field. "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all that he had and bought that field." Picture yourself driving down some remote road on the edge of the Los Padres Forest. You see a sign advertising some land for sale. It is covered with oaks and you see a small stream flowing through the property. As you walk along the stream you notice something sparkling. You bend down and examine a rock that looks like gold. You lift it up and it is extremely heavy. Your heart beats in excitement. You notice other rocks that are also containing gold in them. How many millions of dollars worth of gold are sitting in that stream on this property? You call up the real estate company. The land is still for sale. You sell everything you have and borrow money from all your friends and relatives just to buy the property that contains the gold. Jesus also tells the story of a man who found a priceless pearl. He also sells everything he had just to buy that precious pearl and make it his very own.

Have you ever had the experience of investing in something that really paid off nicely for you? Maybe it was a piece of property, or some stock or even some gold that you purchased. When you see something of great value, you want to make every effort to invest whatever it takes to make it your own. I am holding in my hand a nice tomato from my garden. I invested a few dollars and some time to plant the tomatoes a few months ago. Now we are reaping the harvest of delicious tomatoes. If you really love someone and they treasure your love and you treasure their love, you invest the time and effort to keep that love so you can treasure it even more.

God invested his love in you. The greatest treasure in the world is to be taken from the kingdom of darkness into which we are born and then be taken into a kingdom of light where the almighty God, your heavenly Father, showers the light of his love on you. Wherever Jesus went he talked to people about the love that existed from all eternity between him and his heavenly Father. In our Santa Maria Terrace Bible study we have been going through the gospel of John verse by verse. Jesus often spoke about how close he was with his heavenly Father. He spoke about how he was the one who had come down to this earth to give us a life of love with our heavenly Father that will last forever. Jesus said, "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

What if I could wake up every morning and join the prophet Jeremiah in saying, "Your mercies are new to us every morning, great is your faithfulness?" I can. What if I could wake up every morning and say with the psalmist David, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good and his mercy endures forever?" I can. What if I could wake up every morning and say with Paul, "Nothing in all creation will ever separate me from the love of God that exists in Christ Jesus my Lord?" I can. What if I could join in saying with the hymn writer, "Rejoice my heart be glad and sing, A cheerful trust maintain. For God the source of everything, Your treasure shall remain." I can sing this hymn.

This treasure of the kingdom, this unfailing kindness and goodness of God that follows you and me every day, costs us nothing, but it cost Jesus everything to provide it for us. I have nothing to offer God to earn his love. The prophet Isaiah says of the Lord, "You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?" He then goes on to say, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." But then he goes on to tell us how the treasure of God's love becomes ours. "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father, we are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

God took us when we are nothing in his sight, and made us his greatest treasure by having Jesus pay the ransom price for every sin we have committed. Listen to these amazing words from Colossians 1, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." That's our greatest treasure. We want all the other treasures of life that we seek to become secondary to this greatest treasure.

Why is it so important for people to be given this treasure before they die? Jesus tells another story about fishing to illustrate the urgency of having this treasure of the kingdom of God now. "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake, and caught all kinds of fish." The net is dragged through the water. It catches all kind of fish, some are good to eat and some are not. On our family farm, we had a river going through the farm. We loved to fish. If we caught the ugly and foul tasting carp, we fed them to the cats. On judgment day, the Lord God will separate the wicked from the righteous. Those who have the treasure of God's love that only Jesus can offer will have treasures of eternal joy in heaven. Those who reject this treasure will be thrown into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is our dear Lord Jesus who tells us about the reality of hell where there will be eternal fire and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Every week people die. Some die with the treasures of God's love earned for them by Jesus. Others die without this treasure because they believe they can make it on their own as the person who says, "I'll try and do my best and hope in luck for all the rest." But now let's listen to what Jesus tells us about sharing these treasures with other people while we still have the opportunity to do this.

Share your gift of love in Jesus' kingdom

Jesus asks the disciples if they have understood what he was telling them. They responded by saying, "Yes." Although we understand what it means to be loved by God and to live in his kingdom of love, we find ourselves constantly growing in appreciation of this love. We understand it, but we never reach a point where we fully comprehend just how much our God loves us and cares about us. 2 Peter 3 tells us, "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus." In Ephesians 3 Paul prays, "And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."

Jesus compares this to having a treasure chest filled with treasures new and old. "Therefore

every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” When you look at family pictures, you enjoy bringing out new pictures, but you also enjoy seeing the old pictures as well. The pictures that mean the most are the ones where the family was together enjoying their love that they had for each other. God’s Word has treasures for you, new and old. You enjoy bringing out the old parts of the Bible that you have known all your life. You enjoy discovering new things in the Bible that mean so much to you that you can also share with other people. That is why the Lord leaves us here on this earth. He leaves us here to bring out the treasures of his love and show them to people so they can have these treasures of the kingdom as their own before the end comes. These treasures of the kingdom are not meant to be stored away or hidden in a field. They are intended to be for all people. Think of that little boy who was lost on the trail. He said he was “looking for treasure.” Think of how many people are still searching for the treasure of God’s love that can only be theirs in Jesus. Amen.