

## The Inestimable Joy of Christ

Matthew 13:44–46

by Mason Jordan

What does it mean to live out the joy of Christ in your life in every moment?

What is the thing that you hold most valuable in life?

Or put differently, who or what is the king of your life?

I would imagine if I were to take a poll right now, everyone would say my faith, or the kingdom, or God or something along those lines. Maybe the typical God, Jesus, Bible answer. But is that really the answer? If we (someone probably not me) were to follow you around and chronicle your day, week, month, or year, would they come to the same conclusion?

Let's think about the word value. Value means the regard something is held to deserve. Does your relationship with Christ reflect the value that Christ is held to deserve? Does it point to Christ being the treasure of your life? Or is there something else? Or many things else that take that top spot?

With value and treasure in mind, bring your thoughts around to what is going on in the world today, imagine being a believer in a country that hates you just for being a believer. Imagine getting a note, or being told by an organization that they know where you are and that they are coming for you. And when they get to you, or find you, it means your life is over.

Is this thing you hold most dear in life, the thing you think of when you get asked what you value most in life, going to hold up in that situation? Because that is what our brothers in Afghanistan and in many other parts of the world are facing this very moment. What happens to your faith when a little pressure is applied against it?

Today we are going to be looking at two very similar parables as part of this parable series that we, Redeemers Grace are going through. We are looking at **Matthew 13:44-46** and those three verses give us the power packed, heavy hitting parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Parable of the Pearl of Great Value. Thank you to Glenn for looking at the Parable of the Ten Minas last week. It was a good look into the fact that the King is the King no matter how we feel or think about it. There is most certainly some application that we could apply from that towards this sermon today. We may or may not do that depending on where things go, but if not, just remember, Jesus is king. You are not. Any of your feelings towards that do not change any of those facts.

I don't feel the need to describe what a parable is to you because by this point, that's been done a few times. I will say this though, we've all been pulling from the two same source materials, and the book we read pointed to the purpose of a parable being to do three things:

1. Awaken insight
2. Stimulate the conscience

### 3. Move you to action.

And really, the one main point, the one thing that you need to take home with you today, is that the Kingdom, God's Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, whichever you would prefer to call it, is worth it. And the "it" is everything. It's worth it all. Or here is how John Piper put it, "The Kingdom of God is so valuable that losing everything on earth, but getting the kingdom is a happy trade off."

That is what I will be stressing over the next little bit of time that we have, but if you forget it all and fall asleep, remember that the cause of Christ is worth everything in our lives and we can partake in it joyfully.

So with that in mind and thinking about the three things that parables should do, we will be looking at how these two tiny parables could possibly do that and hopefully this message can do those three things as well.

With all of that said, let's read our two parables:

#### **Matthew 13:44-46**

<sup>44</sup>The kingdom of Heaven is like a 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. <sup>45</sup>Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, <sup>46</sup>who, on finding a pearl of great value, went and sold all the he had and bought it."

[pray]

### 1. Awaken Insight

First, let's take it back to the sermon on the mount. In this most famous sermon we get a glimpse of what Jesus really thinks about treasure.

**Matthew 6:19–21** says:

"Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Obviously this passage could be a sermon in and of itself, or if you're David, that's probably 3 sermons. But there is a very plain phrase that ends this passage: "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

One could very easily ask the question, where is your heart? But what does that phrase mean for how we understand the treasure and the pearl today? Are they related at all?

In the sermon on the mount Jesus is challenging the status quo on thought in many ways. We went through the sermon on the mount a couple (a few? Sometime?) years ago and one of the main takeaways from that is that Jesus was changing the bar and thwarting the expectations of the listeners. They were not expecting to be told that their anger was akin to murder. They were not expecting to hear that their lust was akin to

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adultery. They were not expecting a message about the heart. But that is what it was. And that is where the treasure resides. That is the key thing to take away here as we think further about treasure in the kingdom of heaven. The treasure resides in the heart.

Thinking about treasure:

- When you wake up in the morning, what is the first thing you think of?
- When you are laying in bed at night, what is it that you are thinking about?
- When you are going through your day, what is it that occupies your thoughts?
- What is it that you daydream about?

Are any of these the kingdom? This should give you some insight into what you value or treasure.

One could also wonder if there is any significance to the treasure being buried in a field or what the significance of the pearl was.

There are a few things that we know about these subjects today.

It was quite common for treasure to be buried in that day. I shouldn't say that is what everyone did, because well, not everyone had a treasure to be buried. But there was normally some sort of political unrest or war or something going on, so the safest place for your treasure could very well be the ground. Also when thinking about the parable of the talents, we see one of the people do exactly this. Obviously, things were not good for him. But the idea is, that money being buried in a field isn't a foreign concept and potentially even finding the treasure isn't either. It was something that many of these people probably dreamed about. Do you have dreams about what you would do if you came into a "lottery" amount of money? It is similar to this.

Also, when reading about this, there were some that would raise an ethical question about whether or not it was the right thing to do for this person to buy this field without disclosing the treasure to the current owner. If that is where your mind goes, you are missing the point of the parable and that is a question that is not pertinent to our discussion today. Just know that it wasn't pertinent to Jesus either at this point. That type of question or thought misses what parables are for. The point of this parable isn't to raise ethical questions about the right or wrongness of when and how one purchases a field.

Also when thinking about pearls, the hearers of this parable would recognize that a pearl is something of great value. There would be no debate for them on this subject. Reportedly, Cleopatra even had a pearl that was valued at something like \$28,000,000. Yes. One pearl. It is quite possible the hearers of this parable even knew of the great pearl of Cleopatra. Even if they did not, they knew of the great value of pearls and understood what it meant to desire a pearl of great value.

But with those things being said, one can imagine how the hearers of this parable were able to place themselves in the story and be excited about such a great monetary treasure. The crux of this is that Jesus isn't talking about money at all. He is talking about the kingdom of heaven. A couple weeks ago our brother

Steve made the comment that when you see the phrase, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like..." it gives us insight on how things are supposed to operate.

And this is where we hopefully start to do the second thing...

## **2. Stimulate the Conscience**

Jesus is engaging his listeners. He is captivating them with his parables. He is rocking their world, if they are able to understand anything at all that he is saying.

There are similar things happening in each of the parables, we are going to look at a couple of those things. Let's first talk about the search. What is it you are looking for? These parables give us two different examples of how one found the treasure. One was likely doing his task for the day, maybe working. The other was actively, searching for fine pearls. We have one kingdom that is found without seeking and another that is sought and found. Though, the end result is the same once they found the treasure. Have you found the treasure? What does someone who has found the treasure look like? Think about that. Think about who you know that is living a life that reflects the treasure of our Lord living in them. It is joy. It should be at least. We see that with the first parable. The joy is there. Have you ever known someone who lived out the joy of Christ in every moment of their life? It isn't just a duty.

I recall an example of what it is not. Many years ago at a church event, I was part of a conversation that involved a couple of older gentlemen talking about service and serving the Lord. One just got back from a mission trip, and the other asked how it was. The response? It was work and it was my duty to go. And the other guy, agreed and talked about the reality of it and they went about their day.

Don't get me wrong, there is value to doing the right thing even if you don't feel like it, but friends, do not lose sight of the joy. Do not lose sight of the reason why you do things. Our reason for living, for being in this room, for worshipping, is a very joyous thing. Do not lose it. We were dead. We had no hope. We've been redeemed. Do. Not. Lose. It.

Now we get to talk about this idea where in both parables the man sold all that he had. Is that literal request? Is that what we are being commanded to do? Did the "characters" literally sell everything?

To understand the parable and what it is as a form of oratory, is to know that Jesus is not commanding the hearers of this to do that. But he is calling them to introspection. You are probably remembering a time that Jesus did call someone to do that. In Matthew 19 we have the story of Jesus and the Rich Young Man. I grew up calling it the rich young ruler, but apparently we aren't calling it that anymore. But this is an example of where Jesus told someone to sell all that they possess and give it to the poor.

What is the difference between that situation and us? Why is Jesus not calling us to sell all that we have and give it to the poor? In America this is probably not a question we are asking ourselves. We like our comfort. We like feeling safe. We like our money. So we would probably never wonder that question. The truth is, that if we did, we might not like the answer. Jesus very well could not be telling you to sell all you have and give it to the poor, but he very well might be telling you to.

But I think that is looking at the question wrong. It isn't wondering if Jesus is calling you to sell all you have, or avoiding the thought, or completely pulling a Jonah and running from the people that need you, it is realizing that there is something worth selling all that you have to gain. Because what you gain, is of inestimable worth.

Are you willing to depart with everything that you have, I mean everything, for Christ? Are there things in your life that compete with your affections for the one that showed you what affection was when He loved the unlovable? That's you. The unlovable. But, Christ loves you. He chose to love you. So what is it that you are holding onto? What is it you are unwilling to give up for the Kingdom? Are you taking all necessary measures to acquire it?

At this point we've seen some insight and your conscious has hopefully been stimulated. But what is the call to action?

### 3. Move to Action

As mentioned above, though the treasure or pearl were found in different ways, they were acquired in the same manner. The "man" sold all the he had and bought the field or the pearl.

Let's look to **Philippians 3:12-21**.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

<sup>17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

This was our call to worship today, with good reason. The action in this parable is really quite simple. It is buying in. It is forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. This great passage gives a great promise and a great reminder to those that are in Christ. We wait for our savior.

Our citizenship is not on this planet. Our body will be transformed. It begs the question: Have you bought in enough that you can forsake everything else on the planet for the Kingdom of Heaven? Is the Kingdom worth more to you than anything else in the world? It was for the two people in the parables. They saw what the treasure was and they forsake all else for it. Do we have the same drive? Do you have the desire to live the joy of Christ in every moment.

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I think at this point, I've left some questions unanswered, or there might be one that needs repeating. But I think we will find while answering those, some of our action steps will be a little more clear. So perhaps it is time to move forward with answer some of those questions and maybe some others that will be pertinent to our life and what the world looks like for some of our Christian brothers and maybe eventually us.

### **How much of your “stuff” are you called to sell?**

I think this question is sort of missing the point from the text we looked at today. But the answer is any number things, but maybe we just settle on all of it. As mentioned above. It's a reiteration of the point that what we have on this earth, what we call precious, is rags compared to our king. There is nothing on this earth that compares. It is very possible, even probable, that you could be called to give away many items on this earth. And that is great. We should do it with joy. Reminds me of Matthew 5:41 and being commanded to go the second mile. Whatever it is that is keeping you from giving your all to him, get rid of it. And be prepared to sell all if that is the ask. It might be. It might not be. That's not really the ask in these parables. It's the tell and desire to do that because of how great and joyous the prize was.

### **What does someone who has found the treasure look like?**

Last week, we got the great story about the two ladies who lost their lives serving the Lord. That is a great example of people who have found the treasure. That is not the only example. Hopefully, when you look around this room, you see other people who have found the treasure. It simply means living for Christ. If you are redeemed, this is you. Does your life reflect the fact that you are redeemed and brought into the family of God?

It's hard for me to not think of my mother when thinking about someone who had the treasure. To know my mom was to know someone that loved you and cared for you.

I go back and think about the people that were influential in me coming to Christ. There are a couple individuals from the church that I grew up in that I know prayed for my soul every day. They lived lives that sought the king.

- I think of Carol who every Sunday during prayer (you should be here for this) prays for her family that does not know the Lord. We joyfully join in with her and pray for that as well.
- I think of Darrell greeting every single person that comes in the door and making sure that their is not a single person that feels unwelcome.

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- I think of David feeling the weight of starting this church and wanting to reach this part of our city and how he gave away what could have been a comfortable life to serve here, with all of you, with joy.
- I think of Jim and Judith leaving a church history and tradition that they spent their entire lives in to support their neighbor and to gain a whole new set of friends and a new perspective on faith.
- I think of the Sudermans, Browns, Thames, Petits, and Nomads all coming to a small church with not many families because they believe in serving and want to serve the church and the Lord and show their children what it means to serve as well.
- I think of the Perkins being here since the beginning and faithfully being here every Sunday pushing the buttons to the Glory of God and serving and helping in any way that they possibly can.
- I think of Steve and Nancy following the call with David to be an elder here and take a big step of faith to start this thing.
- I think of Joe and Lois leaving a church that they had known for many years to come to a small church that can't be nearly as comfortable simply because of the call and the call to serve.
- I think of the Hermmans joining us to lead worship of the one true King and having babies in a church and being involved in a church that their family isn't at, but this family is and the sacrifice that that is.

So is anyone in here going to fall off a cliff to the glory of God? I'm not sure. You obviously haven't yet. Maybe one day. Maybe one day the cost for following Christ looks different. But I look around the room and see people that know what the treasure is. It is selling out for the Gospel and this is what it looks like today. Hopefully we are prepared for what it might look like tomorrow or the next day or next year or ten years from now.

How does pursuing satisfaction in Christ now, today, equip us to live joyfully on mission in a future that is uncertain?

Earlier in this sermon I hinted at what is going on for Christians in Afghanistan and how things are incredibly dangerous for them there. And yes. Things are incredibly dangerous for them there. But, there are places in this world that no matter the day or the government overthrow, it is dangerous to be a believer. What happened in Afghanistan and what is happening, isn't new for believers. It is tragic. But believers die every single day on this planet for professing something that we so easily take for granted. How would you handle things in a situation like that? Is the joy of Christ that is in you enough to handle all the things the world is and can and will throw at you?

When thinking about how to apply these things and how to live for Christ in every moment of the day, it's really hard for the practical and application to not always be the same. Our call as Christians is to die to ourselves and Glorify God and enjoy him forever. These parables paint that picture. They show people that were so overwhelmed by the joy, by the treasure, by the pearl, by the kingdom, that they went after it completely.

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We do this by joyfully denying ourselves, every day. Really. Every day. Every. Single. Day.

Our nature is bent towards satisfying ourselves and our sin and anything not kingdom related. The Kingdom of God is satisfyingly counter to that. Wake up every morning and thank the Lord for a new day and the new mercies it brings and the new opportunities to live a life that glorifies the Lord and lives in his joy in all you do and share that with everyone you come in contact with.

Is that Joy for the kingdom the driving force in your life? David often tells the story of early believers sacrificing themselves for the sake of their brethren. You know the story I am talking about right? He paints the picture so well. They are fighting to go first to be fed to the lions because of the joy and comfort they have in Christ. And because of their love for each other. That joy, led to other people knowing the king. That joy in the face of persecution was so counter to anything else going on, that it led to the massive expansion of our faith. It is a faith that grows through persecution. Our faith. This one we claim, is one that seems to grow best when it is through persecution.

Perhaps we are too comfortable here. Perhaps this comfort keeps us from going all in. Perhaps you haven't ever been in a spot in life where you have had to completely rely on him and "sell everything" to be fully dependent on the one that put the stars in the sky.

Have you bought in enough that you can forsake everything else on the planet for the Kingdom of Heaven? Is the Kingdom worth more to you than anything else in the world? Are you able to live your life with joy in every moment? One day, you might actually be put to the test on this. Figure out the answer now before then.

I want to close with **Psalm 8**. It is a Psalm that reflects on the majesty of our King. It is a Psalm that points to the sufficiency of our Lord and our place as his creation. Listen to it. Take in the Glory of our Lord. Take it in. Delight in him. Rest in Him. Live a joyous life for him.

### **Psalm 8**

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Out of the mouth of babies and infants,

you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

<sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

<sup>6</sup> You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

<sup>8</sup> the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup> O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**[pray]**