

Realized Discipleship

Parables: A parable is a kernel of spiritual truth surrounded by the husk of an earthy story. In the parables about God's kingdom, the mysteries of the kingdom are hidden in such a way so that sincere seekers will find the kernel of truth, while those who aren't will find only husk.

Truth hidden in plain sight. Earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The first thing Jesus does when he begins His ministry is to proclaim "Now is the day of Salvation" *"The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel."*

Jesus proclaims that His Kingdom is a **reign** not just a **realm**. He was establishing the authority inherent within a King to rule. All the gospels tell us this Kingdom is not just a **future home** but a **present reality**.

The Pharisees, Sadducees and religious leaders couldn't understand Jesus showing mercy to "Sinners". Goes back to those Messianic expectations... 1.

Messiah would not associate with sinners

2. Messiah would vindicate the righteousness of the Jews

Jesus did not meet their expectations Again they were wrong expectations so Jesus corrects their misinformed ideas of the Messiah.

3 times Jesus talked about the joy that comes when something which has been lost is found. A lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost Son. **Do come in, trespassers will be forgiven.**

So, these parables teach us first, that God wants the sinner.

God not only loves to show mercy to sinners but God actually **goes out to seek the sinner**, or, that *He is actually waiting and watching for the sinner to come home.*

God loves to show "mercy to sinners".

Jesus not only faced difficulty with opposition from the religious leaders, but with the growing doubt of his own disciples over his messianic mission. The disciples needed "Great Assurance." To encourage his disciples, he told them parables of contrast to illustrate the great ends are implicit with small beginnings.

So, the critics were breaking ground. And many ceased to follow Jesus even His own disciples were doubting the validity of His messianic mission.

➡ Into their doubt and confusion Jesus speaks parables of contrast... The Kingdom of God is like a bit of leaven which gives rise to a loaf; it is like a mustard seed which develops into a large shrub. God always finishes what He starts. Step back and see the great contrast between what you were at the beginning and what you will be at the end. *“Remember me not as you see, but as I will be not as I am!”*

➡ *Because the end was not far off, Jesus sought to warn the religious leaders and the people of Israel of God’s impending judgment. He used parables to trigger their awareness that they were, “In Sight of Disaster.” Like a rich fool unprepared for death, or a citizen unprepared for a burglar, so the religious leaders are unprepared for the advent of the Kingdom of God. God has entrusted to them supervision, and now the time of accounting has come, but they stand like children in the marketplace playing silly games while judgment is at hand. They are like a doorkeeper who has fallen asleep during the watch and therefore is completely oblivious to the important events transpiring around them. When God’s judgment comes, hearing the word will not suffice – one must hear and do – the house must be built on the rock and not on the sand.*

The Religious leaders were persisting in their resistance with a wait and see attitude. Why are you waiting; for truly if you wait too long you will be shut out of the Kingdom of God.

This intensified the antagonism of the Pharisees and chief rulers toward him, Jesus attempted to show them that the call into the wedding and the banquet celebration would not be open forever, wait too long and “It May Be Too Late.” They should not be like five foolish maidens who took no oil and found the door locked to the wedding celebration, We must be prepared and Faith cannot be borrowed. You cannot be like guests who were invited and made excuses at first but later changed their mind and found it was too late for the door was then closed.

➡ In order for love to be real one has to be able to choose! So if the sons of the Kingdom (Matthew 8:12), the theologians and the snobs ignore God’s call, the despised and the confessed sinners will take their place. The others will receive nothing but a “too late” from behind the closed doors of God’s glorious banquet hall.

For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, “it might have been
IF ONLY!”

The time was short – the hour was packed with challenge. “The Challenge of the Hour” the question of what the Kingdom of God demanded should not be left in the dark. The guest must have a wedding garment. Like poor Lazarus, the challenge was to stake one’s future on the word of the prophets.

Jesus addressing the religious leaders in particular the Pharisees. All their religion was built on the commandments which start, “Thou shalt not” It was a religion of *not* doing things. It tried to empty men of all evil things but it did not tell them what the good things were. It is never enough to say, “Thou shalt not ...” and to stop there. True righteousness is not just the cleansing or absence of evil but the possessing and doing of good. After evil is disposed of one must go on to put good things in evil’s place or the evil will come back with more force than which it came the first time. PRAY

“Realized Discipleship” is not just something to be obtained in the future but should be a present reality.

Realized Discipleship begins with the discovery of the joy of forgiveness. It is an experience of finding a pearl of great price or a treasure hidden in the field which triggers such great joy that one surrenders all possessions in order to acquire it. It is discipleship which manifests itself in loving God and being a good Samaritan. It is discipleship that realizes that as the Father has forgiven an unpayable debt, so his followers can forgive the wrongdoings of those who trespass against them.

In order to be a disciple of Jesus one must know the joy of full surrender to God. His disciples must live by the law of love, and must unconditionally forgive others.

Let’s stand together... 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. **The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price**
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.”

Sounds like an unlikely story, but as usual Jesus is telling of something that happened frequently in Palestine. Palestine was a land of wars. At any time a man's back garden might become a battle-ground and his house looted; and so to hide one's valuables in the ground was one of the most common ways of preserving one's property. The Rabbis indeed had a proverbial saying, "There is only one safe repository for money – the earth."

Folk-lore was full of just such tales as this. There is one about Alexander the Great. He was once present when the king of a certain country was called up on to decide a case. A man who had found a treasure in a field, which he had bought from another, wished to return it to the seller, who refused to take it on the grounds that he had sold the field with its contents. The king settled the matter by deciding that the treasure should be given as a dowry to the daughter of the one man who was going to marry the son of the other. Alexander laughed and said that in his country the king would certainly have killed both men and confiscated the money.

Many other stories were well circulated throughout the land.

William Barclay "Handbook on the Parables"

"If a man will go to all that trouble to get a treasure that perishes, how much more should you bend all your energies and make every sacrifice to get the treasure that matters most of all?" in other words, "If only Christians were as much in earnest about the things of the Kingdom as sharp-witted business men are about the things of business, what a difference it would make."

It often happened that Jesus came most unexpectedly into a man's life.

Simon of Cyrene ... It was the ambition of every Jew once in a lifetime to attend the Passover at Jerusalem. Jews who stayed abroad would scrape and pinch and save for half a lifetime to make that possible. Doubtless that is what Simon did; and then when he was making his way to the holy city and the sacred Temple he suddenly found himself with shattering unexpectedness carrying a cross (Matthew 27:32). Surely the explanation is that God is looking for us even before we look for Him.

My life: I wasn't looking for God, I didn't know He was lost He knew I was.

There remains one other thing – the man in the parable seized the crucial moment when it came.

James Russell Lowell laid it down: “Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide.”

Matthew 13 verse 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.”

When Jesus spoke this parable, pearls had a strange fascination for men. What we might call the worship of the pearl really came from Egypt, and from the Egyptians, the Romans had learned it. The curious thing was that the pearl was not desired so much for its money value; *simply to look at a pearl and handle it was a source of delight*. In the Jewish Talmud the pearl is often spoken of as being beyond price.

Hidden Treasure [by accident]

Pearl [life long search]

It was apparently by the sheerest chance that the man found the hidden treasure; but it was at the end of a long search that the merchant man found the pearl **he had been seeking all his life**. So then, just as it is possible for a man to discover the Kingdom almost accidentally, it is also possible for him to arrive at it after a life-long search.



There is a place in Christianity for the seeking mind. ‘The unexamined life,’ said Plato, “is the life not worth living.”

Questions are never a problem with God... we have to be willing to seek the answer... No man should be ashamed of his questionings and his doubts. So many people’s faith collapses when it meets with trouble and sorrow and disaster simply because they have not thought things out.

The parable speaks also of necessary sacrifice.

He may have to give up material things. Rich young ruler “Do you have possessions or do possessions have you?”

The classic example is F. W. Charrington, who inherited the family brewing business with all its wealth. One day he was passing a public house when he saw a man, already under the influence of liquor, about to enter, while a woman, obviously his wife, tried to dissuade him. Suddenly the man turned and with one savage blow knocked the woman senseless. Charrington moved forward to help and the, all of a sudden, he saw his own name above the public house door. He said afterwards that with that one blow the man not only knocked out his wife; he knocked him clean out of business. For he got out and had nothing more to do with it.

There may be ways of making money which cost too much.

I love what was said by one man, "The man who had God for his treasure has all things in One. Many ordinary treasures may be denied him, or if he is allowed to have them, the enjoyment of them will be so tempered that they will never be necessary to his happiness. Or if he must see them go, one after one, he will scarcely feel a sense of loss, for having the Source of all things he has in One all satisfaction, all pleasure, all delight. Whatever he may lose he has actually lost nothing, for he now has it all in One, and he has it purely, legitimately and forever."

Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose"

To get the best he had to give up second best

Barclay said, "The invitation of Jesus is, "Follow me." But it was abundantly clear that following Him was a dangerous thing. The orthodox were against Him; the Scribes, Pharisees, and Rulers were out to eliminate Him. His cause looked like a losing one. He seemed to be inviting men to face death so in the parable He was saying, "Are you willing to sacrifice everything, security, safety, comfort, possibly life, to follow Me?" The willingness to risk is the price of entry to the Kingdom."

Barclay further states, "The one point of the parable is the finding of the treasure and the sacrificing of everything for it; just so, a man should sacrifice everything for the Kingdom of God."

Once we have this treasure... this pearl of great price we must not stop our pursuit. **Man pursuing a woman**

Question? What is the chief end of man?

Answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

My Bible Summer Camp 6/29/88 "Enjoy me forever" The cost of full surrender; no, the JOY of full surrender... The cost of discipleship... not the joy of discipleship!

What did you give up to follow Him?

I gave up hopelessness, restlessness, the fear of death, the emptiness of not knowing my creator, SIN

Tired of lemon sucking Christians – don't get just enough of Jesus to make you miserable.

Tozer *To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love. Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Moses used the fact that he knew God as an argument for knowing Him better.*

Tozer again, "Everything in the New Testament accord with this Old Testament picture. Ransomed men need no longer pause in fear to enter the Holy of Holies. God wills that we should push on into His presence and live our whole life there. This is to be known to us in conscious experience. It is more than a doctrine to be held; it is a life to be enjoyed every moment of every day."

R. Kent Hughes in *Disciplines of a Godly Man* says, "The more we expose our lives to the white hot sun of His righteous life, the more His image will be burned into our character – His love – His compassion – His truth – His integrity – His humility."

Joachim Jeremias "These two parables are generally understood as expressing Jesus' demand for complete self-surrender. When that great

joy, beyond all measure, seized a man, it carries him away, penetrates his inmost being, subjugates his mind. All else seems valueless compared with that surpassing worth; no price is too high, and the unreserved surrender of what is most valuable becomes a matter of course. The decisive thing in the double parable is not what the two men give up, but the reason for their doing so: the overwhelming experience of the greatness of their discovery. So it is with the Kingdom of God. The effect of the joyful news is overpowering; it fills the heart with gladness, making life's whole aim the consummation of the diving community, and producing the most whole-hearted self-sacrifice."

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. **The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price**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."

O God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the True God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Thy glory, I pray Thee, that so I may know Thee indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then give me grace to rise and follow Thee up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus' name. Amen.