

## Matthew 13:44-46 “How To Get To Heaven”

3.5.17

This morning we return to the 7 Kingdom Parables of Jesus and we get parables #5 and #6. Today we'll continue to talk about the Kingdom of God as we look at two more of Jesus' parables.

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Look in your Bibles or the screens as we read these two parables together, remembering that a parable is an earthly story with deep spiritual truths.

### Matthew 13:44-46

**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.

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Last week we got 2 parables in 93 words. This week we get two parables in 66 words. Talk about brevity. Jesus is peppering His followers with rapid-fire examples of what His kingdom is going to be like now and in the future.

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Jesus is helping His followers to understand why He hasn't set up His kingdom. Jesus has explained why people are rejecting Him. Remember this... The four soils... the four reactions...

A Sower Went Out to Sow



He's told His followers that some will reject Him because of a hard heart, some will reject Him because they can't handle the persecution and some because the cares of this world will choke them out. Yet, some will receive Him by faith and follow Him and they are considered good soil, because they bear fruit.

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He then told them that His kingdom wasn't going to come while He was on the earth this time, because He was going to give everyone (including Gentiles) a shot at the kingdom and that truth was made known to them via the parable of the weeds and the wheat. The weeds are aka tares.



Jesus told them He was going to allow the good to grow with the bad until the end of the age and then His angels would come and separate those who had accepted Him from those who had rejected Him.

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And finally, last week, we were so encouraged when we saw how Jesus taught them that the kingdom might start off small, but it's going to grow large! He used the example of leaven or yeast

and how it can permeate an entire ball of dough and how a tiny little mustard seed can grow into a



massive mustard tree!

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All of these parables have been about the Kingdom of Jesus. And this morning, we get two more parables about the kingdom.

Now church family, what's interesting is how people through the centuries have chosen to interpret these two parables. We just read about a treasure in a field and a very valuable pearl. What is the treasure? What is the pearl? Some have said the treasure is Jesus. The pearl is Jesus. Some have said the treasure and pearl are salvation. Some have said the treasure and pearl is the lost person...you or me... But, what does Jesus say the treasure and the pearl are?

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Look at it.

**Matthew 13:44a**

**44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.**

What's the treasure? The kingdom of heaven. That's what Jesus said. Okay. What's the pearl? Look at verse 45.

**Matthew 13:45a**

**45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls..."**

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What do the pearls represent? The kingdom of Heaven. You see, it's the kingdom of heaven...Jesus' kingdom that He's been talking about all along. The seed that bears fruit is the kingdom. The good seed is the kingdom. The mustard seed and the leaven are the kingdom. What is the kingdom, THE SAVED...the born-again...those who have given their lives to Christ! So the kingdom is really PEOPLE! And Jesus is describing the fact that it's not time to set-up His kingdom here on this earth yet. However, you can become part of His kingdom NOW! He has given us this season of time, often called the "Church Age" or "Age of Grace" for us to come to know Him as the Lord of our lives.

You see, this has been a mystery to the disciples up to this point in time. It was even a mystery to the Old Testament prophets who penned the prophecies about Jesus and His kingdom. Even they didn't fully understand it. But now, Jesus begins to reveal these truths about His kingdom and as we saw last week, Jesus' kingdom, even though it's going to start out with just a couple of handfuls of people, would grow into a massive tree...look at us here today. We are part of the branches of Jesus' tree...of His Kingdom! We are part of His leaven...the yeast that makes the bread rise!

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Now let's see what Jesus is saying to us about His kingdom by looking at the treasure in field.

**Matthew 13:44**

**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.**

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Now many of us would never consider burying a treasure in a field. We think of dogs burying bones in a yard, but not us...not humans. We don't bury stuff in the ground that's valuable to us. Where do we put our treasure? In a bank, right? A safe deposit box or even a safe in your home. Even under your mattress, but not in a field.

But in the first century, in the days of Jesus... they had no banks or safe deposit boxes. And so it wasn't unusual for people to bury great treasure in the earth.

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Also, as I studied, I was reminded of this dynamic. This was a period of time of tremendous volatility in the years leading up to the Roman Empire in Palestine. There was a lot of fighting and a lot of wars... And so the people of Palestine often buried their treasures to keep the conquering peoples and those who came in to steal and to loot and to plunder from getting it. And so very often when a battle was on the horizon, the people would take their valuable things out of their home and take them out to a field and bury them...and literally would make almost like a treasure map, so they could recover the treasure later. That's important for us to know.

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Something else important to know and understand is just who is this man Jesus is talking about? Look at it again...

#### **Matthew 13:44a**

**44** "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up.

Well, here's a man and he finds a treasure. It doesn't say that he's the owner of the land. Jesus says simply, "...a man found it and covered up." So, what was the man doing? Well, we're not told precisely. Was he a worker in the field? Was he employed by someone to plant the field with some sort of crop? We don't know. But, once he dug it up, he covered it back up. And we know it's NOT HIS FIELD.

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You know Jesus would speak again in Matthew 25 about a man burying a treasure. Remember the parable of the Talents? In the parable, the first two servants took their five talents and two talents and multiplied them, but the third servant buried his in the ground. So, that was a common thing in that day.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us in his writings that it was common for hired servants or workers to be plowing fields and find treasure that had never been reclaimed. So, WE would say, "Okay, that worker is obligated to give it to the owner." No, he's not... Not according to Josephus. Josephus records that according to Jewish Rabbinic law, in essence, "finders keepers." You are not required to tell anyone. The burden is on the owner of the land to know what's on his land and if he doesn't, in essence if you work for him and find something...shame on him for not knowing.

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But, here's why this man in the parable is so ethical. He covers it back up and goes to the owner and says, "I'll give you everything I've got for that field." He could have taken the treasure, according to Rabbinic Law, but he didn't.

#### **Matthew 13:44**

**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.

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So let me ask you again: Who is the man? We've said the treasure is the kingdom of heaven and

we've said that the kingdom is made up of people...us. So, who's the man who gave up all He had to buy the field?

Well, who's been the man in the other parables? Who was the sower? Who was the master of the field that had the good seed and His enemy sowed the bad seed? Who is the one who said, "My angels will separate the wheat from the weeds in the end?" That man is the God/man...it's Jesus!

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After all, isn't this exactly what Jesus did? Didn't He literally gave everything He had for you and for me? He gave His life on the cross! He left heaven and the glory that He enjoyed there to come to this sin-filled earth to be despised and rejected, literally tortured to death, so that He could buy us. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, "You are not your own, you were bought at a price."

Indeed the writer of Hebrews says, "For the for the joy that was set before him..." Jesus endured the cross! He paid the price! Do you want to know what it cost Jesus to purchase the rights to your soul and mine...



That's the price He was willing to pay for you and for me. Yes, JESUS PAID IT ALL, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow! Jesus owns me and I'm so happy! He bought me! Praise His name! He's the man who bought the field...

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Now let's look at the second parable of the pearl.

**Matthew 13:45**

**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."**

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Here in this parable Jesus says, "a MERCHANT." In the Greek that's "*emporos*" and it means a wholesale tradesman of goods. It's not a retailer...but a wholesaler, who would go around and buy things on a wholesale basis and then sell them to somebody who'd retail them. So this wholesaler is working hard to find fine pearls.

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Now, pearls back in that day would be equivalent to diamonds today. Pearls were considered the most valuable gem available at that time. In other words, if you had pearls, you had a fortune.

As I read and studied, it was truly incredible the extent to which people would go to in those days to hunt for pearls. It kind of reminded me of the 1849 gold rush in California. Thousands of people clamored to California to find gold. Well, in Jesus' day they were clamoring for pearls. They would search in particular, in the Red Sea, Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. You'll see that here...



The Red Sea is bottom middle and the Arabian Sea in bottom right and the Persian Gulf is just north of the Arabian Sea on the east side of Saudi Arabia.

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So, what makes a pearl? That would be an oyster or a mussel or like this clam.



That pearl was formed when that clam got an irritant like a parasite or piece of sand inside its shell and it secretes a liquid to cover it and reduce the pain from the irritation.

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Now, people in Jesus' day, didn't go after pearls like we do today with all of our modern paraphernalia.



We have elaborate pearl diving processes today with scuba gear and air tanks, and body suits, etc., etc. In the first century...not so much...if you wanted to go after pearls, you basically tied rocks to your body and then jumped off the side of your little boat and you would sink to the bottom of the ocean floor. And if there were sharks or stingrays, or some other creature of the deep...you dealt with them with a wooden spear. Boy, doesn't that sound like fun!

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You'd scour the bottom looking for those oysters, clams or mussels. You'd take one long deep breath and down you'd go with those rocks tied to you. You'd take a knife with you and after you couldn't stand it any longer...you'd cut the ropes and swim for all you were worth back to the top.

Pearls were very, very valuable in that day and they still are today. But, the Talmud says, "Pearls are beyond price." In fact, the Egyptians actually worshiped the pearl and 1 Timothy 2:9 says that wealthy women would braid their hair with gold or pearls. The Roman emperors, when they wanted

to demonstrate their incredible wealth and show how filthy rich they were, they would dissolve pearls in vinegar and then drink them in their wine.

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You may remember when Jesus said this:

**Matthew 7:6**

**6 “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.**

Jesus was describing the value of pearls. You wouldn't throw a strand pearls at pigs and you don't offer that which is holy to those who will only defame the name of Jesus. So pearls were very valuable.

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Who is the merchant in the parable? Jesus. He's merchant. He's the one searching. He's the one coming after you to offer you the kingdom. He didn't tie rocks to His waist. No! He had nails driven through his hands and feet. He didn't carry a spear...NO one was used to pierce His side to prove He was dead. But listen...it wasn't EVEN the nails that held Him to the cross...it was His love for you and for me. You are the pearl and Jesus is the merchant and He gave all He had for you!

Yes, you are the pearl. And He came way down...down out of heaven to buy you! He went to the bottom...to the muck and the mire of life for you. Oh don't you **believe it** when you're told there's no hope for you! Jesus can get to you. With lungs bursting...ropes with rocks tied to His waist...can you see Him swimming toward you. No! You're not so deep that He can't find you.

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You see, the world might not think you are of any value, but Jesus does. He scarfs up that oyster...there at the bottom...that nasty looking oyster and breaks open and there you are! It's the same with the treasure in the field. People say, "That's a pile of dirt or that's an ugly oyster." But, Jesus says, "No...that's treasure under that dirt and there's a valuable pearl in that oyster."

It's amazing to consider all that Jesus does to come after us. I was thinking about Johannes Slabbert who was with us Wednesday night and how he described how he and his wife Mary Beth and their family... see them on the screens...



How they moved from Wilkesboro from where he had worked at Samaritan's Purse, to Cowley, Wyoming, where it's 99.5% Mormon and yet, there were people praying for someone to come and start an evangelical church there. And it was so amazing to hear the story of how God put it on the heart of Johannes and Mary Beth to move there. It was wonderful to hear how they've already made friends with a young Mormon girl named Moriah

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and Johannes is now teaching her to ride a horse in a barn that a Christian man built ten years ago and when he built it 10 years ago, he didn't even know why. You tell me God can't reach people where they are! Sure He can!!! Will you join me in praying for Mariah...

She's getting closer to accepting Jesus as Lord.

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Oh, it's amazing Church family...Johannes is using that man's barn to lead people to Jesus. Oh...Don't tell me God can't find you. Johannes and Mary Beth's story is truly amazing! God took Johannes, a man born in South Africa and brought him to America to marry a lady from West Virginia and move them from NC to Wyoming just saw He could get the Gospel to people who needed to hear it so desperately.

And isn't this exactly what happened when the Apostle Paul found Lydia, the seller of purple down by the river in Philippi and she and her household were saved? Isn't that what happened when the Apostle Peter was told in a vision to go find Cornelius the centurion and he and his household were saved? And isn't that what happened when God told Phillip to go stand on the road to Gaza and there he found the Ethiopian Eunuch and led him to Jesus? And isn't that what happened when Paul and Silas were arrested and thrown in the Philippian jail and the warden of that jail and his household would come to Jesus?

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You see God will get the Gospel to people. You don't have to worry about that. He sent His Son looking for you and He paid the price. He bought the field... He went down deep in the muck and mire of this sin-sick world...for you and for me.

Are you part of the kingdom? Imagine you are that treasure in the field. Imagine you are that pearl in that oyster in the bottom of the ocean... And the QUESTION IS: Will you allow Jesus to take you and become part of His kingdom?

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You see, in order for you to come to Jesus, a transaction must take place. You must give up all you are and you must receive all that He is. That's salvation. You must be willing to leave the field...the oyster...all that you have ever known and you say, "I'll go with Jesus, wherever you lead, I'll go!" It's really Matthew 16:24.

#### **Matthew 16:24**

**24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

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What's the transaction? Denying yourself!

Jesus comes to you and to me and He paid the price and He's swimming there... holding His

breath and waving His arms...but, you've got to come! Salvation is an act where you exchange **you for Him** as the ruler of your life. You are willing to abandon everything to Him. He becomes the Lord of your life. You slide off the throne of your life and you place Him on the throne! That's the transaction. That's the transaction that must take place for you to be saved and be part of His kingdom.

The Apostle Paul made that transaction and he told about it in Philippians chapter 3. Listen carefully. Here's Paul. The Great Apostle and he's going to tell about all that he had and all that he possessed and how powerful and influential he was... Listen...

### **Philippians 3:4-8**

**4** though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: **5** circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. **7** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

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Paul made the transaction on the road to Damascus. Jesus came looking for him and Paul said everything that I once held as dear, I now consider: rubbish. The Greek means: dung, manure, excrement.

Hey Christian in the room: How did Jesus find you? Who did He use to find you? Do you remember? Who was instrumental in your life to bring you to Jesus? Who put rocks around their waist and went diving for you? Lungs screaming for air...they took the time and the effort and came on behalf of Jesus, looking for you! Aren't you glad!

And so...Christian in the room...who are you going after? Who needs you to tie rocks around your waist and get into the muck and the mire of the depths of their lives to help them? Will you do it? Do you care?

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Maybe you're here today and you realize your lost...you're not part of the kingdom, but you're ready. Today you sense Jesus is swimming right in front of you. You are the pearl He's come to rescue from the depths of your sin and your bondage. And He's beckoning you to come and you see the nail prints in His hands and you realize He paid the price.

He's the man who bought the field for you...so you can be part of His eternal kingdom. He's the merchant who dove deep not with rocks...but with nails in His hands and feet...and now it's up to you to make the transaction complete. Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus and go to heaven and be part of His kingdom? Here's how in ONE verse. See it one last time.

### **Matthew 16:24**

**24** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

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