

Stories
The Treasure
Matthew 13:44-46

July 9, 2023

HDBC

Jesus was a great storyteller. He could keep friend and foe alike, spell-bound with his words. Over 30 are recorded in the N. T. They are called *parables*.

Parable – *para* = beside. *Ballo* = to throw or cast. To throw alongside. Simple story thrown alongside a deep truth. They were illustrations. But there was something really interesting about the stories of Jesus. They did not have the same impact on everyone. For some, they were illustrations that shed light and brought understanding. Earthly illustration of heavenly truth. They clarified.

But for others, they did just the opposite. For those who had made up their mind to reject Jesus and the truth He shared, the stories just kept them in the dark. The seekers of truth would hear a story of Jesus and say, *okay, now I get it. I understand*. The close-minded people would hear a story of Jesus and say, *what in the world is He talking about? That makes no sense at all*.

I **hope** these stories will provide clarity rather than cloudiness. I want to challenge you to embrace this series with an open mind, an open Bible, and an open heart. If you are on the fence about whether to become a believer, maybe these stories will help you make that decision. If you are struggling with some element of our faith, maybe they will help bring understanding. If you feel stuck in your discipleship, maybe they can help jumpstart a new era of spiritual growth. Most are focused on helping us understand the spiritual reality of another kingdom and how we can be a part of it.

This morning I want us to look at Matthew 13:44-46. Two of the shortest stories Jesus told. **Read the Text.**

1. The Stories

The first thing to note is ***the kingdom of heaven is like***. They are to help us understand the kingdom of heaven and how to become part of it. When you

read *kingdom of Heaven* just think in terms of the spiritual realm that we cannot see with our physical eyes, but which is real. God and angels. Heaven and Hell. Judgment or Forgiveness. Eternal judgment or eternal life. Most importantly think in terms of entering that kingdom through faith in Jesus. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a great treasure that is worthy of whatever it takes to get. Getting the treasure is equivalent to entering into a saving relationship with God through faith in Jesus. Being saved. These stories teach the **great value** of being saved. Look at the two stories.

1) The accidental discovery (44)

Consider the context. Wars and raids were common during those times. Few reliable banks. Not uncommon to take treasure, money, valuables and bury them in the ground. Only to be found by someone else. Hasn't happened to me, but it has happened.

Rich Gilson and his wife, bought a house in Wildwood, NJ, about five years ago. Began working on renovations. While digging in front area of the house he started hitting concrete, rock, glass. Then he found two little things that looked like root balls. He tossed them in dirt pile. Kept digging and found another just like it. Examined it more closely, thinking it looked like paper. Sure enough it was. As he tugged at the edge, he realized it was money that had rolled up tightly in a paper bag. They discovered \$1,000 in \$10s and \$20 dated by to 1934. Equivalent to \$22,000 today.

Either someone robbed a bank, or more likely withdrew their cash from a bank because of the great depression and buried it. That's the picture.

In the story a man buried his, then died without telling anyone where it was. Years later the land leased by a hardworking farmer. Very little money but dreams of a brighter day. Plowing and hits hard object. Assumes it is another rock to be moved. Discovers that it is a treasure. Quickly hides it and sells all that he has to buy the field.

Don't be too hard on him. Legally belonged to whomever owned the field. He could have just taken it. But goes through correct channels. Sort of like the **Beverly Hillbillies**. Jed was just *shooting at some food...* Imagine his family when he came whom and started setting up for a massive garage sale. His wife probably thought he had lost his mind.

2) The intentional pursuit (45-46)

Wealthy treasure hunter. He made his living buying and selling precious pearls. Pearls at that time were unbelievable high-priced. Out of reach for the average family. This man was on a forever “**bigger and better hunt**”. Always looking for the bigger and better pearl. He was willing to sell the lesser pearls to buy the greater pearls.

Have you ever known someone on a lifelong hunt. Seem to always be pursuing something more, something new, something else. Never satisfied. **This man** suddenly comes upon the one he is looking for. Knew a good thing when he found it. Willing to sell all in order to buy it. Imagine this guy’s business associates and partners when he began to sell out.

2. The Lessons

Finding the treasure and the pearl are pictures of coming face-to-face with the truth about salvation. They illustrate finding out about the forgiveness that is offered through faith in Jesus. The opportunity to be saved forever from the punishment for our sins and to be brought into God’s forever family. This is the ultimate **Treasure**. That’s what these stories are about. Three things we learn from these stories about the treasure that is salvation in Jesus.

1) The treasure is discovered in different ways.

All people do not learn about the treasure of Jesus the same way. For some it is seemingly accidental. They have no thought of spiritual things. They are just trying to get through this day and on to the next. Get this field planted, then on to the next one. Little or no thought to the future, and especially no thought for the afterlife. But then, suddenly, with little warning they are confronted with a great **treasure** that comes in the form of important truths.

I am sinful and worthy of the judgement of God. I’m in trouble.
God loves me and offers forgiveness and eternal life. There is hope.
Forgiveness and eternal life are offered as free gifts.

Saul/Paul on the way to Damascus. The thief on the cross with Jesus.

A man in Bedfordshire, England. While walking his dog on a river-side path he found an ancient gold penny. After examining it, a coin expert said, "It is quite simply the most important single coin find for a century."

The 1,200-year-old coin bears the image of an Anglo-Saxon king who ruled between 796 and 821 AD. There are seven other similar coins in existence, but this is the only one found from this time period.

Prior to auction, the coin was expected to sell for approximately a quarter of a million dollars. It brought \$409,000 at auction. The price made it the most expensive British coin in history.

Like accidentally finding a rare and expensive coin, some people seem to stumble upon the gospel. Others find it another way.

Some discover the treasure that is the good news because they are on the hunt. They are not satisfied. They know there must be more to life. something is missing, even if they can't put their finger on what it is. So, they search, they spend, they experiment, they look. Try philosophies, wealth, hobbies, possessions, etc. Then they find themselves reading a Bible, attending a church service, or talking with a friend. And suddenly they realize they've found it. The truth about salvation is what they've been desperately looking for. They've found it.

So, we don't all discover the treasure the same way. Second . . .

2) The treasure has infinite value

To put it another way, *it is priceless*. It is worth whatever it takes to get. At least that is what both of these guys thought. They believed it was worth all they had. Not everyone believes that. Some see the treasure & decide it is not worth the cost. That is so sad to me. To know the great value of the treasure and to know that it is available for them and to know that they have rejected it, is so sad. Some find the treasure of knowing Christ and being forgiven, and yet walk away, leaving it behind. Why?

Undervalue the treasure and overvalue what they think it will cost.

In other words, they believe the treasure worth less than what they currently have. Also . . .

They undervalue eternity and overvalue the present. In other words, they think the present is more important than the future.

Don't make these two mistakes. What you have and what you are will not last. The present will not stay the same. It cannot. You can't freeze time.

In the stories these men understood the infinite value of the treasure and therefore were willing to give everything they owned.

3) The treasure is secured through an exchange

In both stories the men walked away **with the treasure**, but both also had to give something up. It costs them something. In fact, it costs them the same thing. All they had. **Here is a great paradox** (a mystery):

Salvation is a free gift. We can't purchase it for ourselves. It is freely offered by God. He paid the purchase price. However, it can only be received **when we give ourselves up**. You must give up the old in order to receive the new. **Putting on a new shirt**. You first have to give up the old. **Moving into a new house**, you have to move out of the other. **You let go of things that will ultimately have no value to gain what will have eternal value**. Both of those men recognized the value of the treasure and immediately took steps to make the exchange. All they had for all they would gain. They gave up what they had in order to gain what was infinitely better. **The point . . . they acted to secure the treasure!**

On June 9, 2000, Melvin Milligan bought the winning ticket for the New Jersey lottery. Worth 46 million dollars. But he stuck the ticket back in a draw with a bunch of other tickets and forgot about it. He heard on the news that the winning ticket had not been redeemed and the expiration date was within a few days. It was also reported that it had been purchased at the same little convenience store where he bought lottery tickets. So, he thought it might be good to look at his tickets.

Sure enough he found the winning ticket and discovered that it would expire in one day. He needed to act fast. So, he mailed in his ticket to the redemption center. You heard me right. He sent it in the mail to the redemption center. He did not use certified mail and did not insure it.

It arrived 2 days after the expiration date. Fortunately for him, the fact that it was postmarked the day before the expiration, it was honored. He almost waited too late to act.

Do you know what an unclaimed winning lottery ticket is worth? Nothing.

Do you know what God's gift of salvation is worth if it is unclaimed? Nothing.

When you come face to face with the Kingdom of God, you have come face to face with a good thing! Jesus was saying to the people of his generation and to every generation, this is a good thing. Don't pass it up. Don't miss it. See it for what it is, a great treasure, a priceless pearl.

Martyred missionary Jim Elliot put it this way. *He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*