

LVI. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
The Kingdom of God and the Word of God
“The Parable of the Hidden Treasure—Receiving the King and His Kingdom”
Matthew 13:44
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
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This is our fifth study in the Kingdom parable studies. Matthew 13:44 says [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.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

One of my dear preacher friends in handling this parable did something that was innovative so I’m going to paraphrase it to get you thinking about this parable. I’m not giving this to you to preach this parable but just to get you thinking about this parable of the hidden treasure. What if I was to walk up to you and say “Hi, I would like to sell you something for \$800. Do you think that is too expensive?” What would be your answer? Your answer would probably be something like, it depends on what it is. That would be the determining factor. What if I were to tell you it’s a used hammer? You’re probably not going to buy it, are you? What if I was to tell you it’s a Mercedes Benz in fine running order and had never been driven? You would probably say something like, “Preacher stay here I’ll be back this afternoon” and you would go liquidate whatever you need to liquidate to get that \$800 because \$800 is nothing compared to that new Mercedes Benz. This is light illustration to hopefully get us thinking as we get to this fifth parable.

We are in our summer series where we’re studying the seven Kingdom parables. This takes place in a very specific time in the life and ministry of Jesus. He had begun to teach with a fascination and fixation using parables. His disciples even said He wouldn’t teach without using parables. That was to fulfill the prophecy that the Messiah would teach in parables from the Psalms and it would also be used to heighten, reveal and accelerates the spiritual disposition of His hearers but out of the 32 recorded parables in the Scriptures He uses at least of them deal with the Kingdom of God which would be important because this is the way Jesus starts His ministry; repent and believe the Gospel for the Kingdom of God is at hand.

What is that Kingdom of God? It had been prophesied and unrolled in the Old Testament as a physical Kingdom with spiritual implications entrusted to a nation. Now Jesus is going to take the parables and teach us that the fulfillment is not a physical Kingdom with spiritual implications entrusted to a nation but a spiritual Kingdom with physical implications that’s going to all the nations but never owned by one nation. He takes seven parables to teach us about this fulfilled, realized Kingdom that He is purchasing at the cross, will establish in His resurrection and ascension and bring to consummation when He comes again. Between His ascension and His consummation this is what the Kingdom looks like in the seven parables.

These parables are found in Matthew 13. There is a clear pattern that Matthew has affirmed in Jesus’ ministry and that is while the seven parables each have their message, they are given in three pairs of twos. Then the seventh parable is a summation

called the Gospel dragnet that is to go throughout all the world. We are on the fifth parable in this study and have already looked at two sets of two. They are not identical twins but fraternal twins where you can see similarities and a common message. They are a repetition of the same message but there is something a little unique about each one. Every parable has a singular message with multiple implications.

He begins with two parables of sowers where Christ is a Sower and Satan is a sower. He gives the parable of Christ the sower to communicate to us that the Gospel of the Kingdom is coming by way of the Word of God to the hearts of men. The hearts of men are either believing or unbelieving. Unbelieving hearts have three manifestations – hard ground, rocky ground or thorny ground. So God has to work in the heart for it to be good ground. The seed is preached through the preaching of the Word and sharing of the Word being sown by Christ. The seed is the Gospel of the Kingdom. The message here is the condition of the soil determines the fate of the seed. So if it is hard ground, rocky ground or thorny ground it doesn't bear fruit. If it is good ground it bears fruit but to have good ground God has to intervene to work on the soil of our heart so that it can receive the seed.

How do you know when God has brought someone into the Kingdom and He brought the Kingdom to their heart? There is a root, a shoot and fruit, some thirty, some sixty and some a hundred fold. Not everybody bears the same amount of fruit but every believer is a fruit bearer because they have a shoot and the shoot has a root. That then tells if they are in the Kingdom but Satan and his evil empire strikes back, for there are many ways that he strikes back.

Satan has three basic strategies. One is intimidation usually using the power of the state against the Kingdom of God. Another strategy is infiltration where wolves come in sheep's clothing. An example could be preachers who are supposed to be angels of light but they are really giving a message of darkness and death. Then there is a third strategy we see in the wheat and the tares or the darnel or the bearded darnel and this tells us that Satan is a sower. He has a ready soil out there in the world for manmade religion and it's his strategy of imitation. The tare looks like the wheat and even looks like it has fruit but it's not fruit for it is a fungus. It is a bearded darnel that brings death. Satan sows a churchianity that mimics the Gospel but denies the Gospel and when people believe it even sincerely it brings death not life. The Lord tells us that He will uproot that when He comes. In the meantime you keep planting the seed of the Gospel through evangelism and discipleship throughout the world.

After these two parables He moves to two more parables that are twins. It is the mustard seed and the leaven, again getting the same message across but with some differences. The leaven is hidden in three lumps of dough and the mustard seed which is the smallest seed, is put in the garden growing inconspicuously that grows up to be a tree that blesses the garden and even the birds of the air. The nations of the world can find benefit if they rest in it. He is teaching us that the Kingdom of God begins insignificantly. It is dismissed by the world as insignificant, grows gradually, develops irrepressibly and triumphs ultimately.

Now we come to the third set of twos. It is the hidden treasure and the costly pearl. Both have a similar message to them in that the hidden treasure is so treasured that the man sells everything he has to get it and the costly pearl is so glorious that this man is willing to give up everything he has even all of his pearls just to have that one pearl.

Again, they are not identical but fraternal. It is repeating the same message with something unique that you get in the costly pearl that is not in the hidden treasure. What is unique in the costly pearl I will tell you in the next study but for now you can see what is unique after we look at what they both have in common from the hidden treasure.

So I'd like to do an overview of the parable of the hidden treasure. There are five things that give us this story. Number one is that there is a treasure. It is not just any treasure, where the Kingdom of God is like treasure. It doesn't say it's like *a* treasure but it's like treasure. Number two this treasure is hidden. It is not noticeable to the eyes that are looking. Number three, it is hidden in the field. Number four it is providentially discovered by someone in the field. Five, there is an intentional response to that discovery.

This parable/story is not really unusual except maybe the finding of it. When people would get capital/riches they wouldn't go invest it in the bank for there wasn't any such thing as investment banks back then. They had banks but they were only used for exchanges in which they would make a little money when exchanges were made. You didn't want to lose your treasures and you couldn't invest them so people would hide them. People would find boxes that were resistant to the elements or more than likely they would find an earthen vessel that had developed that they would put the treasure in and then seal it down.

When I've gone to Israel I take people to this cave where a shepherd boy had thrown a rock into and when the rock hit the inside he heard something crack. He climbed up to find out what it was and it was an earthen vessel that had been sealed. In it were scrolls and they went and found more. They found out that when the Romans came down in 66 and 70 A.D. to destroy and occupy all of Israel the Qumran community had fled and taken what they had treasured the most which were these copies of God's Word and other literature. They had put these in a treasure chest of earthen vessels and put it where no one could find it yet someone just happen to find it.

That's what has happened here. Some man has taken his treasure and hidden it in a field and either he forgot it which is more than likely what happened or he dies and no one knows where the treasure is. Perhaps this other man is just working the field and his plow comes up against something where he thinks his plow has just hit another rock. He goes to take care of it and as he is digging this up all of sudden he sees this vessel. He looks inside and finds a treasure that is beyond imagination. It is incomparable. What does he do?

He does three things. The first thing he does is he puts it back for safe keeping. Perhaps he dug another hole in case someone came back to that hole but he covers it up so no one could see it. I have often thought we probably could have found out his theology pretty quickly at that moment. Is he a good, reformed Christian theologian or not? If he had found it and said "Oh my goodness, I'm a lucky man" he may not have been a Christian because he might have said something like "Oh my goodness I've been providentially blessed" if he were. Look at what I have discovered providentially. He covers it and then immediately 'on account of his joy' he sells everything that he possesses. Notice he is not selling to get joy but he is selling because of his joy.

I can just imagine him coming home and saying "Honey, we're doing an estate sale today." "What are we going to sell?" "Everything!" "Why are we going to sell everything?" "I'll tell you later, we just need to sell everything. Put the sign out that

everything goes at 2pm.” He gets the money from the proceeds, goes to the owner of the field, buys the field and now he’s got the treasure. It’s all his and it’s so glorious. Whatever he had to sell did not matter at all for out of joy he had sold it all. It was full liquidation for full acquisition.

A parable is a simile that is extended into story. So what is the singular message here? First I’d like to say what it is not. It is not teaching us Christian business practice 101. It is not here to teach us that you have to buy your salvation. One it has already been purchased at the cross. Jesus said ‘it is finished’ and that was payment in full. Romans 6:23 says [23] *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Thirdly, this is not telling us the way to do ministry. It is not telling us to go hide the Kingdom of God, Jesus or the Gospel in the fields. No, it has a very clear message.

It tells us the treasure is unmistakably Christ and the Kingdom. The Gospel message communicates Him as that treasure. There comes a time even when someone is not looking for it that God gives them eyes to see and ears to hear and they discover it. When they do, there is an abounding, abundant, unstoppable joy that comes over them and the value of everything begins to fade in comparison. Here is the treasure, the joy, and the singular response so what is that singular lesson of the parable? The singular lesson is the takeaway.

The takeaway is the joy of discovering an incomparable treasure will ignite a joyful and total liquidation to facilitate a total acquisition. Nothing else compares so anything and everything that would hinder obtaining that acquisition is liquidated. Here is the picture. The Holy Spirit brings the Gospel of the Kingdom to someone who is not even looking for it and they are surprised by grace. There is a glorious Savior who liquidated all of His riches to humble Himself on a cross to give you Himself who is beyond comparison. Here is this glorious Savior who has liquidated everything to make you His acquisition and then He calls you to Himself as your Treasure. You now reflect what He did. You liquidated everything to have Him as your Treasure, the One who has loved you and loosed you from your sins.

The Holy Spirit has surprised you with that message for up until now it has been hidden. We don’t hide the Gospel for the Gospel and the Kingdom are at work in the world but it is hidden to the world. The world is blinded by unbelief just like you and I was. Here is my example. I love to talk with preachers and tell them there is a moment in their ministry where someone will go through their new member’s class to join the church and say to them, ‘Praise the Lord for you preacher because I grew up in church and I never heard the Gospel until I got here and heard you preach.’ I tell preachers when they hear this to back off from all that they are feeling at that moment because there are kids that grew up in your church that are telling some other preachers the same thing. I do think there are times when people grow up in churches and don’t hear the Gospel but many times what you’re hearing is someone who grew up in a church that actually preached the Gospel but it was hidden because of their unbelief. It is the Holy Spirit who showed up and gave them eyes to see and ears to hear and they ‘wow’ discovered it. Now that they have seen it nothing is going to stand between them and that treasure.

The key words in this parable are the treasure, joy and all. Words have to mean something and the words in the parable clearly mean Christ the Treasure, when He is discovered by grace with such joy that the same grace gives you the ability and desire

within you to liquidate anything, everything, totally, all that you might unhindered obtain and receive that treasure. That is what He is teaching us in the text. Nothing will prevent the complete acquisition so there will be a total liquidation. I want to drill that down just a little bit with you in this study.

There are some implications of this singular message. The first one is to have the treasures of Christ you must have Christ alone as your Treasure. Christ has given us many treasures and they are glorious, beyond compare and magnificent. When you come to Christ you get a new heart – you are born again. You get a new record – you are justified with the righteousness of Christ. Your sins are wiped away. You are given a new life. II Corinthians 5:17 says *[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* You're given a new family, a family that God is putting together of brothers and sisters in Christ. He is working on them – He'll use them to work on you and you to work on them. You are adopted. You get a new life in which sin is disappearing and holiness is being embraced – sometimes in fits and unevenly but He is growing you in the grace and knowledge of Christ. You get a new home and you're headed there. He is preparing a place for you even as He is preparing you for Himself on the way there. Those are treasure!

Not only has He given you all these new things but He has given you liberty and freedom. He has given you freedom from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin and He is freeing you from the practice of sin. One day He'll free you from the presence of sin. He has given you the Holy Spirit and where the Spirit of God is there is liberty. He has freed you from the fears of this world. He has freed you from the fear of fear and from the fear of death. He has given you the glorious blessing of the fear of the Lord. He has set you free that you might know Him, love Him and make Him known out of love to Him. He has given you the treasure of a promise – I'll be a God to you and to your children after you. He has given you the blessing of a marriage that is in the Lord and for the Lord. He has given you the blessing of a promise to raise your children in and for Christ.

You don't come for those treasures. You come for Him. We don't reach into the treasure chest to pick out the coins we want. We embrace the treasure. We don't come for the treasures of Christ. We come for Christ our Treasure. We come for Christ as our life. That's why in our liquidation that we're not only ready to liquidate the treasures of sin, death and idolatry but we're ready to liquidate the good treasures in life. It's not I love You because You've given me a marriage for it's not conditioned upon my marriage but anything and everything, even the good gifts of God, that we would put ahead of, beside, before or above the Lord is liquidated. Here is my wife, she is Yours and not mine. Here are my children, they are Yours and not mine. Here is my job, it's Yours and not mine. I liquidate everything to possess nothing to be possessed by You and then I'll be a good steward of everything for You but I own none of it. I'm not coming to Christ plus, but I'm coming to Christ alone as my Treasure.

Here is what Paul said when not looking for Jesus yet attempting to be an adversary for Jesus and then he meets Jesus on the Road to Damascus. He is confronted, falls and surrenders and then says 'For to me to live is Christ' (Philippians 1:21). Christ becomes his treasure and he says "I count everything as loss for the joy of knowing Christ" (Philippians 3:8). So we also liquidate the good gifts of God to give them back to

God so that we might come to Christ unhindered and unhampered with anything that we would put beside, above, or below Him.

Then life comes under the sovereign hand of God and we begin to find out if we really liquidated all or if we still need to liquidate. We lose a job and we get angry at the Lord. We didn't get that marriage proposal we thought we were going to get. We look to the Lord and say "This isn't what I bargained for." Many of us come to Jesus to get something, like to pass a test. The adversities of life are in the sovereign hand of God to show us treasures that we have not yet liquidated for Him – a marriage, a spouse, children, a job or our fame. Particularly now where we're headed in this culture, Satan with the world will probe to find out what you treasure more than Jesus.

So if I'm in the academic world will I hide my trust in Him and His Word because it is mocked in my world or will I confess Him? Will my academic affirmations and appreciations be more important to me? Will I verbally own Christ in the sports I play or in the classes I'm in or in the job I have? I'm not talking about being obnoxious or arrogant in owning Christ verbally but the time will come for us to decide if we'll confess Christ before men or will we deny Him. The world will probe to find out what we treasure more than Him. When they probe it's the time for us to liquidate and if you don't liquidate then you'll abdicate.

I know when difficult times come I'm not saying it's not a struggle. Read the book of Job. He lost much. He struggled. He questioned. He asked. He investigated. He meditated. He dialogued. He worked his way through it. Ultimately he said "Though He slay me yet I will serve Him" (Job 13:15). My God is my Treasure. I shall yet see Him. I shall see Him in all of His glory and that is enough. So when the world comes probing even to the point they will take our life, we live in the shadow of many who when they came for the families, jobs and their own life with agonizing deaths, they did not fear those who claim the things of this world because their treasure of God gave them the heart to give everything to the Lord. He was their treasure and their life. So even though you kill me, all you did was promote me. I'm headed to see my Treasure when I leave this life.

Here is another takeaway. To have Christ you have to have Christ on His terms. You don't come for the treasure of Christ, you come for Christ as your Treasure and the treasures are given to you by Him. You must have Him on His terms and His terms are clear – they are unconditional surrender. He doesn't negotiate. Our lives do not earn our salvation but when we come to our Savior we come and say "I surrender all." I have yet to find the implications of that surrender. I'll find out more and more throughout my life. He has my house, job, family, and everything. He is my Treasure. I may have inordinate desires sexually but I give them to Him for He has my sexuality. He has my reputation, my life and everything in this life because He is my life and He has everything because I surrender all that I would be surrendered to Him. I know I'm going to falter. I know the Holy Spirit will give me the ability, will challenge me and encourage me. The world will challenge me but I surrender all.

Here is the third takeaway. The liquidation of everything is not for the acquisition of joy but for the acquisition of Christ because of our joy. It's not an act of drudgery that I surrender. It's a Holy Spirit, Christ framed surrender of everything because of the joy of Christ. There is joy in living for Christ but it's when I have discovered the joy that the Son of God has left all to make me His treasure, now I leave everything in order to make

Him my treasure so there is a liquidation for complete acquisition out of joy and yes more joy is coming.

It's a liquidation of motivation – joy. It is a liquidation without reservation – I surrender all. It is a liquidation anticipation transformation – look what He is going to do with me as He molds me and makes me as I surrender all. He has His way with me and not me trying to force Him into my way. He has me and makes me what He wants me to be. It's a liquidation of motivation, without reservation, of transformation and of anticipation for nothing compares to having Him and all that it means to have Him in this life and the life to come. I have ahead of me the sight of my Savior. A deathless body will be given to me and a sinless eternity will be my environment. It is a liquidation with anticipation without reservation because of the Holy Spirit given ability to see the treasure so that my heart will sing of no other name but Jesus for nothing compares with Christ the Treasure. Nothing will hinder me as receiving Him as my Treasure and nothing will hamper being received into His Kingdom.

The hymn writer says in *Be Thou My Vision*; Lord, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. High King of heaven my Treasure Thou art. I would like to close with a family illustration. I have three children and I will narrow this illustration down to two for it has to do with one of my girls but that's as far as I will go in who it is. One of my girls loved stuffed animals. When I was away I always knew what I could buy for this child and it was just any stuffed animal. In the evenings she would go to her designated rocking chair and she would begin to pull all of her stuffed animals around her. She has her arms around them and there is so many that they are falling out. That produces a disappointed scowl on her face, even if she is able to hold all of them.

A little bit later after her mother was finished in the kitchen she would come into the living room and look at this child trying to grasp every stuffed animal of value with the scowl on her face. Her mom would sit down and say "Come here" and the stuffed animals would be disposed of immediately for off they would go. The incomparable joy of being in her mother's lap caused a liquidation of everything in the lap where she tried to stuff every stuffed animal.

That is what your Savior is saying – O run to Him unhampered, unhindered on His terms and come and find the embrace that is lavished by His grace. It is incomparable. Jesus, I surrender all. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. I'm struck by the fact that there may be some reading this today who by Your grace and mercy are reading this where You are working in their lives and they have heard of the treasure of Christ. I pray that they have discovered it today and now unhindered and unhampered they will surrender all to have Christ as their all. Just call upon Him for He gave Himself for you. You give yourself to Him – say "Jesus I come." For us Lord, as we sing before You, 'riches I heed not nor man's empty praise, Thou mine inheritance now and always, Thou and Thou only first in my heart, high King of heaven my treasure Thou art.' I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.