

LVII. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
The Kingdom of God and the Word of God
“The Parable of the Costly Pearl—Receiving the King and His Kingdom”
Matthew 13:44-46
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August 16, 2015 – Morning Sermon

We are in our summer series in Matthew on God and His Word. We are covering the Kingdom parables. This is the Word of God. God’s Word is inerrant, infallible and true. Matthew 13:44-46 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. [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.”*

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

We are in this series this summer, the Kingdom of God and the Word of God. We have only one more study in this series. Our study has been on the seven Kingdom parables in Matthew 13. These are seven of the 32 parables that Jesus taught that affirmed that He was Messiah and these parables exposed or made clear the spiritual condition of those who were listening. Six sermons from our Savior are distilled to some degree in your Bible – one is in the Gospel of John and five are in Matthew. This is the third one in Matthew and it’s the Kingdom sermon.

Why would Jesus take the time to put together seven parables to teach about the Kingdom? I think there are many reasons and one is because of some shifts that are taking place. The Kingdom of God had been at work in one nation – Israel, with the promise that it would go to the other nations. Now the Kingdom of God is not in one nation but the Kingdom of God under the stewardship of the church is to go to all the nations. The Kingdom of God was physically in one nation with spiritual implications. Now the Kingdom of God is going to go to all the nations spiritually with physical implications.

So what is this Kingdom like? You can’t enter it without being born again. What does it look like when you enter it? How are we to see it? Jesus says it’s not going to be exhaustive but I’m going to give you seven parables to understand it. When you look at the parables unmistakably and very clearly you see they are arranged in three sets of two with one as the summation. We will look at the Gospel dragnet in the next study. I look at them as twins but not identical twins. You see them as fraternal twins. You can tell they are alike and they have the same central points but there is something distinctive about them.

The first two were sower parables. Jesus is the sower of good seed and with that we are told how to get into the Kingdom. You get into the Kingdom by the Gospel of the Kingdom getting into your heart. There are three unbelieving hearts – hard ground, rocky ground and thorny ground. When God’s Holy Spirit comes and changes your heart then you have good ground. You know its good ground because it has a root, a shoot and fruit, some thirty, some sixty and some a hundred fold but the believer doesn’t get into

the Kingdom because they are bearing fruit. It's the bearing of fruit that shows they are in the Kingdom and the King is in them.

Satan becomes a sower and he sows bearded darnel everywhere. Satan is restricted and he is not going to stop the Kingdom from going to the nations. He can't stop it but he does oppose it. He opposes it one by intimidation. Two is by infiltration. Three is by imitation. This parable talks about Satan the imitator as he puts out this tare that looks like wheat but it doesn't have the fruit of wheat but it's this bearded darnel that is a fungus that brings death. Jesus says not to go around and rip all that up for a lot of reasons and one of which is that some of that bearded darnel He is about to make into wheat. So our job in the world is to keep sowing the Kingdom. There is still church discipline in the church but in the world God has His angels that will do the job infallibly when Jesus comes again. So we go from the good Sower with the good seed and the evil sower of the bad seed to the next set of two.

Now we go to the two parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. That is teaching us that the Kingdom of God is dismissed by the world and it is seemingly insignificant. It starts off so small but the leaven leavens the whole lump. The mustard seed, the smallest seed in the garden, grows up to be the largest plant of the garden like a tree. It even provides the blessings for the birds of the air that nest in it, like the nations of the world who are even blessed by it. It will be relentlessly triumphant in this world. This Kingdom shall rule and reign forever.

Then we got to the third set and we've already covered one of them and that was the parable of the hidden treasure. Remember parables have a single lesson with multiple implications. There is a single message about to enter and receive the Kingdom of God. In this parable you have very likely a tenant farmer who doesn't own this field he is working in but just working it. I guess his plow hits something and he sees that there is this treasure. That wouldn't have been unusual back then because money then was just used for exchange and not to make money with. Banks weren't a place of investment they just made a little money off of you when you needed money in the exchange or they were places in which you got money for exchange.

So back then when you had a treasure you put it in something that protected it from the elements and buried or hid the treasure somewhere. It's an uncertain world because you can hide something away, not tell anyone and then you die yet no one knows where it is hid. This man has providentially struck this treasure and convinces his wife to sell everything to get the land this treasure was buried in. The takeaway from the hidden treasure was the discovery of an incomparable treasure inevitably produces an intentional and joyful liquidation of everything for an unhindered acquisition of that one thing. The key phrase in that parable is 'from his joy' he sells all he has to get that treasure. He has seen this treasure and it is incomparable, nothing compares to it. To gain unhindered acquisition of this treasure this man will engage in total liquidation to have this treasure that is incomparable.

Now we get another parable that is seemingly teaching the same thing but it's a little bit different. Matthew 13:45-46 says [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.* By using the word 'again' He has attached it to the previous parable. In the hidden treasure you have an unsuspecting farmer who

stumbles upon providentially an incomparable treasure. It is so overwhelming that he is moved to sell everything he has in order to acquire it.

This one is a little different. We don't have an unsuspecting farmer who stumbles upon a treasure for we have a treasure seeker in this one. Here is a man who searches for treasure. It's his whole life for that's what he does for a living. He is into seeking, securing and selling treasure. His is also a treasure seller but this time on his journey he finds one pearl that is so valuable and glorious it suspends his vocation. He no longer is a treasure seeker. This pearl now changes his vocation. Now he initiates a new endeavor in his life which is the total liquidation of everything to get that one pearl.

We see that this is a fraternal twin because it is pretty similar to the hidden treasure. So the question at this point might be, what makes it to the Bible under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and when there is only so much room, why repeat anything? Both these parables say that a person finds a treasure that is so glorious they basically sell everything to possess it. It seems as if very clearly that this treasure of the pearl parable is basically teaching the same thing as the hidden treasure parable.

So why would it be there in repetition? When the Bible repeats something it is not an accident for the Holy Spirit inspired it and basically repetition is in the Bible for three reasons. One is that when something is repeated it is for emphasis. I want you to get this. Secondly, He is clarifying for He says it one way and then says it again in a little different way to bring clarification to it. Thirdly, when He repeats it a little differently He is putting something unique to it that we should take the time to find out.

So we know what He is repeating for He is repeating what He already taught. Here is a treasure that is so glorious and incomparable that the one who finds it will liquidate everything in order to acquire it. I think there is something unique as to why He uses a different picture of this treasure seeking merchant. Let's look at it this way as we start to come to our closing takeaways.

We have here the tale of two treasure seekers. One is a treasure seeker who really didn't go seek a treasure but found the treasure and that was the farmer. As he found it providentially he was moved to sell everything in order to lay hold of it. The other is seeking treasure and has found a treasure that is so glorious that he now no longer seeks treasures. He starts selling treasure to get that one treasure and everything has changed. What has happened?

One wasn't searching but was surprised by the treasures of God's grace. He went to that field to work it not look for treasure but then in the sovereign hand of God, he discovered by the grace of God the grace of God that was so glorious in the treasure of this Kingdom that his life was transformed forever. His value system changed. Everything about his life changed on the day he was surprised by God's grace, when he found something he wasn't even looking for and everything was liquidated in order to possess it.

The other one was a treasure seeker but on that day he found a treasure that was so glorious that he wasn't surprised by grace, he had the surprise of grace. It was a treasure that caused him to no longer seek treasure because this treasure was incomparable. If I have this then I have everything therefore everything is on the block for me to have this. His whole life all changed as soon as he found this incomparable treasure. One was surprised by grace when he finds the surprise of grace and the other is surprised of the grace that he has found for it caused him no longer to be a treasure seeker

anymore. He divested of everything he had just to have this one. All he needs is this treasure alone.

What is it now that they have received? What I said in the last study was that it caused them out of joy to totally liquidate everything to acquire the treasure. Now I want to drive the point home because clearly it is repeated for emphasis. So I am going to state it differently for emphasis. Without total liquidation there is no salvation – unconditional surrender. To have the Kingdom and to have the King as your Savior requires unconditional surrender, non-negotiated. Jesus is not seen as an addition but our ambition. This treasure is so glorious, profound, beautiful and valuable that there is a stacking of our arms where we will no longer rebel against Him that life is about me – my power, my appetites gratified, my possessions. I stack arms and now all that I now use as my identity in life – what I treasure in this life – is eradicated and liquidated.

Please get this. Total liquidation is not what you and I do to earn, merit or purchase the King and His Kingdom for it is what the King says you have to do to receive the King and His Kingdom. It is what we do to receive Him. You have a King and when you come into His Kingdom there is no other King. He alone is King when you come into the Kingdom. Secondly, when you unconditionally surrender and liquidate everything because of the majesty of this King, His Kingdom and the Gospel of the kingdom that you have salvation in Him, then that glorious work of God's grace in your life is done in a way that is beyond our comprehension because of the majesty and beauty of that King. It's not something done and I might get some joy, it's something done because I've seen the treasure and there is nothing that can compare to Him.

This is the King who left His Kingdom – everything – in order to come and save nothings. We were helpless enemies and sinners. We stood in opposition to Him and the unmerited love of God sent His Son who left everything to come for nothings and make us something glorious. Our life is kind of like this country bungalow and things aren't exactly the way they should be so I'm going to add Jesus into my life. He'll have His own guest room in the bungalow of my life. Jesus is welcome in the bungalow of my life. That is not what Jesus wants or calls for. Jesus doesn't come in to our life to occupy a room. He comes in to demolish our life to make you a palace for a King and He has room for you in that palace. He is making you and your life a palace for Him the King.

So when you come into His Kingdom that means you shift values. That means you have come to Him alone as Lord and Savior to embrace Him in your life and you have a new King. You have stacked the arms of rebellion against Him. You have set aside all those things that you think that the world says this makes you somebody and you say 'no' and count it loss that I may gain Him and have Him.

Again, this is not what you do to merit the King, His Kingdom and salvation. It's what the King says you do to receive Him. In other words, we're not taking Jesus on a test run. No, Jesus, You are my life. You and I have no idea the implications of this yet. When you come to Christ unconditionally surrendered we have no idea of the implications of what is yet going to occur. It is absolutely astounding what will occur in your life. The book of James talks about testing in our life. Satan tests you in order to trap you in sin. God tests you like my algebra teacher tested me. My algebra tests had two purposes. One was to show me what I knew and two to show me what I didn't know.

So the rest of your life as a Christian God is even going to use the tests that Satan brings evil and use them for good and God will show you that you surrendered to Him and the things you're still holding onto. So when we're converted its unconditional surrender but we still have things we're holding on to and things that are holding on to us. In the rest of our Christian life He will start showing us those things so that we divest treasure after treasure after treasure. I thought I came to Jesus to get my marriage. No, I came to Jesus so that Jesus could get to my marriage. I came to Jesus to get Jesus and Jesus now sends me into my marriage. It's not Jesus to get something but it's Jesus is my everything. Now He frees me to bring something and to bring Him to others. So that's the direction the parable is bringing us to and now I want to bring this to a conclusion by looking at a passage.

I want to look at Philippians 3. At conversion when you are taken from the Kingdom of this world and you go to the Kingdom of God, you change Kingdoms because you've changed Kings. You now have one King and it is Jesus. You don't know all the implications of it yet and you don't do this to earn it but you do this to receive the King and His Kingdom. The gate to the Kingdom is narrow. You can't fit through it with your hands clutching to other treasures. Christ becomes all and in all. Coming to Christ is radical. When you come to Christ faith and repentance is radical. It is a radical turn to Christ and a radical trust in Christ. It's radical but it's reasonable.

What if I said give me \$500 and I'll give you a sports car and I throw in the White House. You would say 'are you kidding me?' Jesus says here is how you come to Me. You set it all aside and you receive Me. When you see who He is, then everything else is nothing. It's not that I have to give up everything for I'm actually giving up nothing in comparison to Him. When you see Jesus everything is nothing in comparison to Him. So that He is everything. That's why you have to know Him. Pray for me so that I can preach the Bible, pray that you get into the Bible to meet this Jesus because when you see Him and discover that treasure that radical commitment becomes a very reasonable thing. That makes sense.

I have prayed long and hard that God would never allow me to dishonor Him with scandalous sin, including sexual immorality and not break my family or marriage, not dishonor the church or the ministry so I have done a number of things. I'll tell you something that has helped me. When I was at Covenant College and I was Youth minister I was paid \$25 a week. One day I took the baseball team, basketball team, and youth ministry out to do some studying and I invited them over to our house for some lunch and forgot to tell Cindy I was coming. With \$25 a week there wasn't much money at the end of the month. We had cheese sandwiches, chicken noodle soup and ice tea. I said laughing to my wife "Hey Cindy where's the chicken in the chicken noodle soup? Think we could get the tea a little weaker?" I've learned. I took them all home and came back and saw the tears staining her eyes because what she did I didn't know and that was she went next door to borrow the bread and she used Velveeta for cheese which is the best excuse for cheese that has ever existed. She used spaghetti noodles and a chicken bouillon cube and called it chicken noodle soup. She pulled the tea bags out of the trash bin and reused them. It was all we had but she never said a word.

I pray that my love of Christ would keep me faithful but when I met her and experienced that love from her and that devotion, I don't have room for anything else. You think 'total liquidation' that's nothing when you meet Jesus. It's nothing when you

see His beauty and His love for you to leave the glories of eternity to go to that cross to save you from your sins. No longer are there the gratifications of appetites, the currencies of this world and its applause that hold any desires in comparison to Him. Now let me show you a man that met this. Now in Christ I can glorify Him forever and see all of His breath taking beauty for there is nothing in comparison to Him. Paul saw that. Here is what he said about it.

Philippians 3:2-11 says [2] Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. [3] For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—[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 [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—[10] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

This is the Paul that was on the road to Damascus and is stuck down. He sees this theophany and says “lord, lord who are you?” “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” For three days he deals with these claims of Christ and Paul comes out of those three days and says “Everything I am and I have is more than loss and everything that I will suffer is nothing compared to the majesty, glory, and grandeur of having Christ and Christ having me.” Then he says “I am a Pharisee of the Pharisees. I am obedient to the law.” He looks at all he had as rubbish. The word rubbish here literally means manure. That is the way he looks at all of that in comparison to Christ. He didn’t want anything to hinder him from having Him and receiving Him.

There was a treasure seeker who came to Jesus who had some gaps in his life. He was a rich young ruler and he said to Jesus “Good Teacher, what do I need to do to inherit eternal life?” “Do the law.” “I’ve done that.” “Go sell all you possess and follow Me.” So he wouldn’t come to Christ, hindered by his treasures. The text says he went away sorrowful holding to his great possessions.

So today, will you go the way Paul did or the rich young ruler did? I don’t know if you came looking or if the Holy Spirit came looking for you. Did you find the treasure in the field or were you looking for it? I don’t know but I know what the treasure is and in comparison nothing should stand between you and Him. So this day liquidate everything and give it to Him as you give yourself to Him.

I love Tolkien and his Lord of the Rings trilogy. I love the recent production of this trilogy and I love the part when Aragorn is coronated as king over Gondor. In Minas Tirith earlier there had been a usurper over Gondor. When he was the king the buildings were gray, the tree was bear, and everything was dingy and dusty. Then Aragorn is made the king and now that barren tree is blossoming and it just keeps throwing out the

blessings of the blossoms everywhere. All the buildings are white and everything is glorious because the king is now in place.

That ultimately is what the Gospel of the Kingdom is all about. If Jesus is King then everything makes sense. If He is not, then you have a life of despair and death but when you receive the King, He is enthroned upon your heart and you say no rivals, then before the Lord is a day and a life that makes sense. There is no one like Him. Salvation is a free gift that cost you everything but the everything is actually nothing in comparison to the King. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Jesus for teaching us and if you came searching or came to a field and you heard of a treasure – a Savior who gave everything, left everything and calls you to receive Him and surrender to Him, you say “Jesus, I want You. I don't want the emptiness of other kings for to give You up I would be a fool. Jesus You are the treasure I seek.” If you need someone to talk to, call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. There is a glorious Savior. Come to Him for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.