

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN HERE ON EARTH

August 06, 2023

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The First Lesson; 1 Kings 3:5-12

Psalm of Day; Psalm 119b

The Second Lesson; Romans 8:28-30

Sermon Text; Matthew 13:44-52

We are going to read the very first verse of our sermon text for today, from Matthew, chapter thirteen, verse forty-four. This is Jesus talking, and it is a parable.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid again. In his joy, he goes away and sells all that he has and buys that field.

These are your words, Heavenly Father. Lead us in the way of truth.
Your Word is truth.

Amen

Two weeks ago, on Sunday evening, Sherri and I were at home, sitting on the couch. I was looking at my phone, searching for my 'dream' pickup truck, when all of a sudden I found it! It is a 1990, vintage model, that is in great condition. It is a red, Nissan, D21, hard body, four-wheel drive, with low mileage. It looked cool, and it looked tough. They kind of have a 'cult following', so they are sort of like collector's models. And, it is not very far away, down in

Indianapolis, Indiana.

When I saw this truck, I thought, *“That is exactly what I am looking for!”*

It was a really, really reasonable price, for twelve thousand dollars, and something I could afford.

So, of course, I did what any guy would do. I said, *“Sherri, check that out!”*

She took a look, and I think she is tired of me looking at trucks, because she said, *“Well, call them on the phone.”*

Which I did. We had a great conversation. I found out stuff that made me want it even more. It was owned by only one owner, who was an old husband and wife. They had owned it since 1990. They had driven it very little, so it only had 46,000 miles on it. That was it! The man had been in Pearl Harbor, and there is a sticker on the back of the truck that said, ***“Pearl Harbor Survivor.”***

Because they both died, it now was for sale.

Then, I thought, *“Oh, I got to have that truck!”*

So, I am talking to the guy on the phone, and I said, *“Look, there is a problem. I am a pastor, and I am super busy. There is no way I can drive all the way to Indianapolis to look at this truck. So, if I buy it, I would have to buy it sight unseen. Let me think about it for a little bit. You are going to have give me a little time. If you sell it before I make a decision, that is fine.”*

And he said, really nicely, *“I tell you what. I will give a week. I will give you one week to think about it,”*

So, last Sunday night, at seven p.m. I had to make the phone call. I had to weigh the benefit, the reward, verses the risk. The reward was I could have this really cool truck that I had been looking for, for a long time.

But, the risks were this.

I would be buying it sight unseen. Sometimes things look a lot nicer in pictures than they do in real life. And, I would not be able to

drive it, until I actually owned it.

Number two, I would be buying it from a private individual, long distance. Somehow I would have to pay him electronically, and he would have the money, before I ever got the truck. That is a bit of a risk, although he sounded trustworthy.

Number three, I would have to figure out how to somehow get it shipped up here by a trustworthy shipping company.

So, it is seven pm, and I am weighing risk verses reward. (I am going to see how well you know your pastor. If you think you are going to see a red, 1990 Nissan, hard-body, pick up truck out in the parking lot next Sunday, raise your hand. If you don't think you will see it, raise your hand. You know me pretty well!) I weighed the risk verses reward, and I was not willing to take the risk.

There is a guy by the name of Blaise Pascal. He was a philosopher. He weighed the risk verses the reward, *“What if you believe in God, verses what if you don't believe in God?”*

He came up with something that is known as 'Pascal's Wager'. He said, *“Look, if you make a decision to not believe in God all of your life, you are taking a risk. The risk is you could be wrong. If you are wrong, because there really is a God, when you die, what have you risked? Well, you have risked literally loosing everything for all eternity.”*

Then he said, *“On the other hand, if you do believe there is a God, you take the risk to believe there is a God, and you believe in Him all of your life. When you die, and you find out you were right, there really is a God, well, just think what you have gained. You are set to gain everything for eternity.”*

So, he said, *“Rationally, it just makes more sense to believe in God.”*

Now that is not a great reason to believe in God, but I want to show you from scripture today where Jesus talks about a man who was willing to take a risk. The risk is, he was willing to give up

everything, everything he owns, just to have one treasure, which he found buried in a field, somewhere.

Now, let's look at that parable a little bit.

-First of all, I want to talk about the field. It says this treasure was hidden in a field. Could you imagine if we all got in a bus right now, and drove up to a cornfield? You have probably seen thousands of cornfields in your life. They can be pretty, and fun to look at. We would all have certain emotions, as we look down at the cornfield.

But, let's imagine you knew that underneath that cornfield, there is a buried treasure, a hidden treasure. You would look at that cornfield differently than everybody else. We would all say, "*Look. Another cornfield. Pretty cool.*"

But you knew, "*This cornfield is dear to me. There is a treasure hidden under this cornfield.*"

-So, when Jesus says there is a man who found a treasure hidden in a field, what is '*the field*' He is talking about? '*The field*' Jesus talked about is this. It is this book, **The Bible**. This looks like any ordinary book, doesn't it? You could go to the library, and there would be tens of thousands of books that would look very similar to it. They would be on a shelf, and they would contain words in it just like this. They would have paragraphs, sentences, and chapters. They would have stories like this does. They may have history, and maybe even theology like this does. But, Jesus is telling us there is something different. It looks like an ordinary book, and many people look at it and think, "*That is just a book*", but, Jesus is saying this book is like '*a field that has a hidden treasure*' that has inestimable value.

I want to feebly, feebly (*and I can never do this service adequately*) but I want to feebly show you '*the treasure that is buried inside this field*'.

I am going to give you four examples.

-One day, (now this lady I am about to talk about has long since died, and gone to Heaven, so don't worry I am not talking about you.) one day this lady came in to my office. Her shoulders were down, and her head was down. I could tell there was something really bothering her. She sat down in the chair, and she slumped down. There was something really weighing down on her.

She told me, “*Pastor, I feel so bad. I feel so guilty. I feel dirty and rotten.*” She was pouring out her heart, as she said, “*I have committed this sin.*” (She told me what it was.)

She said, “*I just wish I could feel clean. I wish God would take the burden off my shoulders. I feel like God does not love me. Pastor,*” (and her lips started quivering) “*I am afraid I am going to go to Hell. Am I going to go to Hell?*”

I took out this 'treasure chest' (*The Bible*), and I opened it up. I let her see the 'coins' that are in there. I started out with passages that use the word 'all' and 'everyone'. One said,

**“God was reconciling the world the world to Himself,
not counting people's sins against them.”**

I said, “*That's everybody.*”

At one point I said, “*You are telling me you are a sinner, aren't you?*”

She said, “*I am the worst.*”

I said “*There is a passage right in here (The Bible). It is like a gold coin.*”

**“Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners,
of whom I am the worst.”**

I said, “*Right here, right here it says God, Jesus, came to save you.*”

I showed her this 'coin' in here that says,

**“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son,
cleanse us from all sin, all sin.”**

I said, “*This is like a treasure chest, and it talks about what Jesus has done for everybody. It is like there is a blank, and you can write*

your name right in that blank, and say, 'Jesus died for me, and my sins.'”

Then I said, “*Because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, He wants you to personally know Jesus died for your sins. So, He tells us that if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. God has sent me, as your pastor, to tell you personally, on His behalf, that you are forgiven.*” It was like I took a 'coin' out of that 'treasure chest', and pressed it into her hands.

I said, “*This is not me talking. I am just speaking on Jesus' behalf. By the authority of God, I declare unto you the gracious forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*”

The tears started to flow, as she looked at me. It was like she 'threw her arms around that treasure'. She said, “*Thank you. Thank you. **Thank you!** The burden is off of my shoulders to know that I am clean, in Jesus' sight.*”

I am going to tell you something. There is amazing 'treasure' hidden in this 'field'. And, that woman would have given up everything in the world for what she had in this 'treasure'.

-Here is example number two. I was teaching Adult Instruction Class one year. There was a guy in the class who I could tell was 'keeping it at arm's distance'. He had been brought up in a church where he was taught you have to earn God's favor. You have to do enough good things, before God will love you, and God will ultimately save you, and take you to Heaven.

I could tell this man was really wrestling in his own heart with what God thought about him, and if he had really done enough good things. And so, he did not know if God loved him. He did not know, and he was uncertain, absolutely uncertain as whether he was going to be saved, or not. Because that was all weighing on him, he 'kept it all at an arm's distance' from him.

Then, we got to the lesson on how to get to Heaven. I opened up

this 'treasure chest', (*The Bible*) and I wanted him to see all 'the coins' that were in there. I concentrated on the words '*mercy*' and '*grace*'. Mercy and grace are totally undeserved. God gives us what we don't deserve, for Christ's sake. For example, I showed the passage, 'the coin' in here that said,

“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith.

It is not from yourself.

It is a gift of God, not by works,

so no one can boast.”

I explained to him we can't earn our way. We don't have to earn our way to Heaven. If we did, we would never be sure. We would never be sure, if we did enough. But, here in *The Bible* it says it is all by grace, and Christ has done enough. He has done it all. He lived for us a perfect life. He died for us. Our sins are gone. The Bible promises, promises if you believe that, you are saved.

It was like that man was standing in a field. All of a sudden he saw this 'treasure chest' open up. He looked at me, and asked, “*Do you mean to tell me that I don't have to earn my way to Heaven? God is just giving it to me, as a free gift, because of what Jesus did?*”

And, I said, “*Yeah, that is 'the treasure'.*”

He asked, “*Do you mean to tell me that I don't have to be uncertain about whether I am going to Heaven? I can be sure, because of the promise in there?*”

I said, “*Yes, you can be sure.*”

I am going to tell you, it was like Heaven opened up for that guy. I could see him 'throw his arms around that'. I can tell you something. There is 'treasure hidden in this field'. That man would not give this up for everything in the world.

-Example number three. This has happened many times, where I have talked on the phone with somebody who has gotten really, really difficult news, like they have cancer, serious cancer. You can hear in the voice the concern, the worries, the fears, all of it with the

unknown as to what is going to happen. It is such a privilege to be able to just 'open up the treasure chest', and do something all the doctors, all the medicine, all of the surgery, all of the chemotherapy all the radiations, all the world could never do. That is bring ultimate comfort. Go right to a passage, for example, that says how much Jesus loves you, how much God loves you. God spared not His own Son for you. He could not have paid a higher price for you. And, if He loves you that much, The Bible says, and promises, He is going to take care of all of your needs, no matter what they are. So, that means

- the God who is all wise is working on your behalf.
- The God who is all powerful is working on your behalf.
- The God who wants your eternal welfare is arranging everything on your behalf.

So, we can trust that wherever He goes with this, He is going to work it out for our good.

I tell you, people hang onto that like a treasure that they would not give up for anything in the world.

-Last example, and I have had this conversation many times. A loved one dies. A mom, a dad, a brother, a sister, a son or daughter, a husband or wife. There is grieving. There is the understanding, "*I am not going to be able to look in your eyes again.*" "*I am not be able to hold your hand again.*" "*I am not be able to lie down beside you at nighttime, anymore*". And, that hurts.

It is such a privilege to be able to open up 'the treasure chest', and show them passages in scripture that show Jesus came, not just to conquer sin, but to conquer death. Someday, on the Day of Resurrection, your loved one in Christ is going to get up out of the grave, and you will be able to look them in the eyes, hold them by the hand.

There is unimaginable 'treasure' in here, (The Bible), and it is free. It is all free. It doesn't cost a penny.

So, why does Jesus say this man found a hidden treasure, hid it again, and then he sold everything he could, everything he had, just so he could buy that field, and have that treasure?

While it is free, we certainly understand it is such a 'treasure', and in joy we would give up everything, if we had to, just to hang on to this 'treasure'.

Which gets me back to that 1990 Nissan pick up truck. Spiritually, we all have a '1990 Nissan pick up truck' in our life. Here we have this 'treasure', The Bible, with inestimable value, and then there is this (*spiritually*) '1990 pick up truck' over here, that is calling to my heart, and calling me away from a 'treasure' that is of unimaginable value. We have this 'treasure', but our sinful hearts (*just think how sinful our hearts are*), there are things that can actually draw us away from that. Temporally, we consider this 'pick up truck' as a better treasure. *"If I could just have this friend."* Or, *"If I could be involved in this sin"*. Or, *"I count this as the most important thing in my life"*, and be drawn away. There are even people we know who have literally let go of that 'treasure' to have one that moth and rust are going to corrupt, and thieves break in and steal someday. It is not going to last forever.

We have this straying heart, that is a sinful heart. And, we all need to acknowledge that, which is why I am going to take you back to 'the treasure' in here, The Bible. That just shows how much we need this 'treasure', when we look at what our hearts are like.

How do you know what something is worth? I suppose it all depends upon what somebody is willing to pay for it. For example, baseball cards. It is just a piece of cardboard, with a little ink on it. It is worth maybe a penny. So, do you know what Babe Ruth's rookie baseball card sold for? 4.2 million dollars. That is what it is worth. That is what somebody was willing to pay for it.

Do you know what Mickey Mantel's rookie baseball card sold for? 5.2 million dollars, because somebody was willing to pay for it.

Then, there is this guy named Honus Wagner who played baseball in the early 1900's. Just a year ago, his baseball card sold for 7 million dollars, because somebody was willing to pay that.

Sinner that you and I are, what was God willing to pay for you?

Everything. Everything. He gave up His life. He bled and died. He took your sin. He took your shame. He took your guilt. He purchased you at a massive price. That is a treasure worth everything, everything.

Here is the last thing. There was a guy in 1998 (*maybe some of you remember this guy*). His name was Forest Fen. He was told he had terminal cancer. He was a millionaire who decided to take his wealth, and turn it into gold nuggets and precious gems. Then, he put it in a treasure chest, and buried it in The Rocky Mountains.

Next, he wrote a poem. If you could decipher the poem, it would tell you where the treasure chest was. Finally, he made it public.

People started looking for this buried treasure, because it was worth over two million dollars. Five people died looking for this treasure.

One of them was a pastor who put himself in a very precarious position, and ended up dying. Finally, some guy found it. But, he wanted to remain anonymous. Why do you think he did not want anybody to know who he was? It was because he did not want anybody in on the treasure.

This passage says that man went, and sold everything he had with joy. With joy. We have 'a treasure' we don't want to hide from anybody. We want everybody to know this 'treasure'.

I am so happy today we are installing Pastor Van Kampen. As a church, our goal is to share that 'treasure' with as many people as we can!

Amen

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts, and our minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Amen