

Our Greatest Possession

Matthew 13:44-46

⁴⁴ *“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.*

⁴⁵ *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one very valuable pearl, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

The Scripture before us is the first portion of our Gospel reading from Matthew 13. It also served as the basis for our VBS theme this year: Our Greatest Treasure. For the children in our VBS, we want them to find in Jesus their greatest treasure. He's the reason we sinners have hope. Out of love for us he left his throne of glory to take on a humble existence in life and win every sinner forgiveness for every sin and a place in eternal life. When you compare that to anything else in life, well, there really is no comparison. If our children learn that Jesus is our greatest treasure, then all the time and effort in putting together this year's VBS was well worth it.

The verses before us are two of seven parables that Matthew 13 records. As we take a closer look at these two earthly stories with heavenly meaning, we're going to see that the kingdom of heaven—keeping Christ Jesus close to us ruling in our hearts and in our lives—is our greatest possession in life. It brings us lasting joy. It's value far surpasses anything else in life. May the words of our Savior help us treasure his kingdom forever.

What do we learn about this treasure? It is hidden. Mankind does not naturally know this treasure even exists. Scripture tells us, *“What no eye has seen and no ear has heard and no human mind has conceived—that is what God has prepared for those who love him. But God revealed it to us through his Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Man remains lost in sin and unbelief and can do nothing to change that sad condition. But then God's Spirit comes along and works faith in a sinner through word and sacrament. The Holy Spirit convinces the sinner that God loves him or her in spite of their sinfulness. He loved them enough to take their place in life. He took our place under God's holy law and obeyed it flawlessly. When temptation to sin came his way, he resisted them all and offered God a life of perfection. He then traded his holiness for our sin. He took the curse for every sin. God's law condemns the whole world for its sin. And our Lord died for every one of them. He rose again on the third day as his Scriptures said he would. Now we have God's forgiveness

stretching over every sin. Now sinners can look to God in love and know that in Christ Jesus they are his children and heirs of eternal life.

When a person comes to know Christ in that way, he finds a treasure. It brings him joy. He's willing to give up everything so he might have lasting joy in Christ. Compared to the joy he's already experienced in life—the joy of success, the joy of family, the joy of victory—it all seems so petty compared to the joy of being God's child and inheriting eternal life.

You and I know about joy. We see it in our children and grandchildren. We see it at graduations and at weddings. We see it at birthdays and anniversaries. But what do we know about joy in this world? It comes to an end. It ends when children and grandchildren are in tears from a skinned knee or someone's failure to play fair. It ends when an unsatisfactory grade comes back for work that was not done to one's best. Joy comes to a halt by a couple's argument that could have easily been avoided with selfless love and a forgiving heart. And celebrations at birthdays and anniversaries end when a loved one is taken by death.

But the joy that Jesus brings us has no end. It even gets us through difficult days in this life. It keeps us focused on life with our Lord. And who can really grasp what that life is like. To live without sin and its effects. No more pain or sorrow. No more sadness or heartbreak. We won't need hospitals. We'll have perfect health. And the joy we will have every moment we are there. Think about having perfect relationships with everyone, even with those who were a bit shady when we knew them in life. And joy and holy pleasures surpassing every joyful event we've ever experienced on this side of paradise. That is precious because of the treasure we have in Christ.

Immediately following the parable of the hidden treasure, Our Lord shares a similar story about a merchant in search of valuable pearls. All that he's found so far have some value. But then he finds one that surpasses all the rest. Like the man in the other story, he joyfully sells everything he has so he might possess this pearl of great price. This pearl he now possesses has value above everything else in life. All the riches in the world do not compare. Those riches will only get you so far in life. Now he's got a pearl that has value for eternity. He treasures it like none other.

Again, that's what a person experiences when he has a relationship with Christ. He knows the grace of his Lord. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor,

so that we through his poverty might be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). He knows his Savior is true God. But he chose to humble himself to death on a cross. Even his heavenly Father would forsake him there. But when his work was complete, and every sin was wiped clean with his precious blood, it was finished. Now every soul that puts their trusts in him is saved for all eternity.

This Scripture reminds us that our greatest possession is one that some tend to forget. Both men in Jesus' parables found their treasure while they were not looking for it. One was not looking for anything. The other was looking for other treasure. The kingdom of heaven is also found by people who are not looking for it. A person finds the grace of God when the grace of God finds him.

If a sinner has found Christ and his salvation, he possesses greater treasure than this life offers. He now possesses life with God and can look forward to an eternity in God's presence. In both parables each man sold everything because nothing in life can compare to his new possession. None of the finest things the world offers can even approach what he has in Christ his Savior.

We know what we have in Christ and his gospel. We know what it can mean to people to hear the good news of salvation proclaimed week after week. We know what the forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven in Christ are worth. When know they are worth more than all the rest of the world. The world is not looking for what we have. But we must keep in mind the people of our community who do not know what treasure we have to offer them. We're not going to wait for people to come to us. We must go to them.

The treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price is Christ Jesus and his kingdom of heaven. The field could represent the Scriptures where Christ is found. Upon seeing the incredible worth of Christ and his kingdom, both men in Jesus' parables do everything within their power to make this treasure their own. Each man is so overcome with joy at the prospect of possessing Christ's Kingdom that they spare no expense or effort at acquiring it.

May we never lose sight of the greatest possession we have in Christ. May we never worry about any needs we have in life. But let us seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. And everything else will fall into place.