

**Sermon for March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 The Third Sunday of Lent**

**Matthew 13:44-46**

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD  
AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Today is the **second** Sunday in our preaching series on the *Parables of Jesus*. **Last** week, if you remember, we received the **Word** through the *parable of the seed and the sower*. Jesus gave his hearers, the large crowd to whom he was speaking, a very clear and distinct description of just **exactly** what that parable meant.

**This** week, we receive **God's treasure** through these two short, basically one sentence parables. **Today** we heard two rather different stories **each** with very distinct ways of approaching the message; and yet, they have the **same** focus and story line—the finder of a **treasure** of great value went and sold all they had to own that **treasure** for themselves. One **other** thing, in these two parables Jesus is **only** talking to his disciples—the ones who **have already** given up all they had to follow him. I would imagine these parables had great meaning for them given their **own** circumstances and commitment to Jesus.

**Many** times interpreting Jesus' parables can be challenging because the meaning is **not** all that clear. **This** is one of those days. As you heard, we have **no** explanation given; we have to rely on our **own** ability to place these stories within

the context of our **own** lives. Today we have **no** explicit guidance with which to turn to interpret these parables. The hearing and application is up to us.

**This** is when we bring what Martin Luther called our *ten-ta-tio*, when we bring **our** personal experiences and **trials** to the Scripture text. We have only our **own** lenses or filters by which we hear God speaking to us through these two stories.

But what are these parables asking of us as present day disciples of Jesus who respond to the **call** of the kingdom with a commitment that risks all without reservation? What is it about this **priceless** treasure that God offers us that calls people to make this kind of commitment, to possibly leave home, to leave family, and to leave **all** we have to follow God? What is it that has called **Emily Done** and **other** students from Cal Baptist to leave **their** families and the comfort of what **they** know to spend part of **this** summer this year spreading the **Good News** of God and the **gospel** of Jesus Christ into various parts of the world? Where do you suppose the joy and treasure lie for **those** students?

Here are a few things for us to think about this morning: where does **our** joy lie, where does **our** tenacity and passion for **God's Word** lie, where do **our** values lie, and what price are **we** willing to pay to be a part of the Kingdom of heaven? **These** are the questions we are being faced with in these two parables. I ask these

questions to help us **discern** what these parables mean for us in our **own** lives.

Where is **our** commitment to God?

But I would like for you to think for a moment about your most valuable or precious treasure. What **are** you willing to do to keep and protect that treasure?

In Jesus' time **burying** valuables in the ground was a method of storing them for **safe** keeping. In Jesus' time **pearls** which were gathered primarily from the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean were considered very high in value, they were considered among the most valuable of goods; having the *'topmost rank among all things of price'*. So, once again, the treasures in these parables would have been something the people of Jesus' time could have readily connected with.

**More** important than the people knowing what Jesus was talking about—is the **response** of the people **in** the parables. Those who were willing to go and sell all that they had to have this **precious** gift which had been found. What **is it** about the **treasure** God offers us that is **so** precious? A **treasure** that, for some, is worth giving up **everything** for?

Since each of us has our **personal needs** these two parables can have a **very** different meaning for **each** of us; although, **both** of their messages are rich, real, and true. It is how we **interpret** them that allows them touch our hearts in varying ways. Because I am rather sure there are very few of us in the world in which we

live in today who are willing or able to give up **everything** they have to physically leave and follow wherever they are called to go.

Our everyday lives are ruled by habits, routines, customary ways of being. We are so **attached** to our everyday lives and find so much **comfort** in the material things and the **stable** circumstances of our lives that these can all too readily obscure God. **Unless** we realize that these things are **not** what they seem to be and that they **will not** last forever we take the chance on missing out on the more important thing. The **treasure the salvation**, that thing of **great** value which God offers us, which is for **all** eternity. The Kingdom of Heaven is ours for the taking. To choose the pearl of great price or to joyfully find that hidden treasure is to obey Jesus' urge for us to cast aside all except the single minded pursuit of the Kingdom of Heaven which is ultimately going to save us for all time.

What that means for us here and now is that being in **pursuit** of the Kingdom of Heaven is to make a drastic and life changing turn. To continue to live **in** the world and **for** the world, but **not be exhausted** by its values and norms. What we can do is make a commitment to God through the **way we live** our lives. To **seek** the kingdom and its righteousness are the **focus** of that commitment, even while we live lives in the midst of this transient world which will someday **fall away**.

In these parables there is an **interplay** of searching, finding, celebrating, and selling **all** order to possess something of **great** value. These discoveries **disrupted** normal daily life and priorities; they **required** risk and sacrifice. In these actions the **power** of that which has been found is seen to be **at work**. The **treasure** and the pearl shapes the **new** life for those people **who** found them.

Jesus tells the story which is the mark of **true** disciples. Ones that seek **God's** kingdom and righteousness first and foremost. A once in a lifetime discovery, an event one only dreams about, the **incomparable** worth of the kingdom and the need to do all one can do to obtain it. One gladly risks **everything** to have the unexpected opportunity to be a part of God's salvation with **all** its blessings.

There is **no** price that we can put on the **precious** gift that God has given us through Jesus Christ. His **life**, his **death** on the cross, and his **resurrection** on our behalf is a treasure beyond compare. It is a treasure no amount of money could buy. Our life in Him is worth **everything**. This is a treasure which has been offered to **one and to all**. Thanks be to God. **AMEN**.