

A Pearl and a Field

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Text: Matthew 13 [13:44-46]

Matt 13:53, end of a discourse section, end of the parables discourse

We do not know this section well—the sower, yes; the weeds, maybe. These two seem to be a set with several parallels and an obvious agricultural theme.

Then the mustard seed and yeast which seem to have the same basic message (the power of small and invisible influences); and thus provide another set of two parables.

The hidden treasure and the pearl of great price where we will find our specific text today, and of which we will say more. As we will see, these say something about what matters most in the kingdom, kingdom priorities, and about discovering what is not obvious, even what is hidden. They also say something about the surprising nature of the kingdom.

Finally the parable of the net which is somewhat ignored for its difficulties. Its message seems to be the nature of the judgment.

Thus we have seven parables in this section, interesting.

We are looking at the parables of the hidden treasure and the precious pearl of great price.

Introduction

Begin with three question sets?

#1—what is of surpassing value?

- What matters most in your life?
- What matters most in the church?
- What matters most in the kingdom? What is of value, what want, what give to get it?

#2—what are appropriate priorities?

- What are valid priorities?

#3—what surprising results may come?

- Have you ever been surprised by God?

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Connect this text to Jesus' words about loving God and loving our neighbors

#1—what is of surpassing value?

Old Spanish proverb, "Take what you want, said God; take it and pay for it."

Jesus tells two parables about taking the best and paying for it. The best is to find the kingdom, the cost is everything you have.

Kingdom things are not for the weak of spirit, for the moderately interested.

Robert Heinlein, "To enjoy the full flavor of life, take big bites. Moderation is for monks."

Jesus encourages us to find and buy the finest God has to offer. This is wedding feast; not a time for dieting, not a time for cutting corners. I will buy the very best I can.

But the difficult part of the text is that cost: Jesus warns that the cost is staggering. No wonder—what is gained is priceless.

Sometimes the kingdom of heaven is found by accident. The kingdom of heaven is a treasure waiting to be found, like a man plowing. Illus: like \$20 bills packed into the hay bales.

Sometimes, the kingdom of heaven is found only after diligent search, like the pearl merchant who at long last has attained his goal.

Sometimes there is a great amount of intention and purpose in the search.

Here's how it works out—some folks who never consider themselves to be religious types are amazed when their life is suddenly, unexpectedly invaded by a messenger from God. Others pursue God for years, wondering if the treasure will ever be found.

The point of this parable/these parables is not the method of discovery, but the incredible value of the find. Eph. 1:18.

We live in a world where people are more and more inclined to buy junk. Why are we willing to pay hard-earned money for junk, for that which will not last, that which has no lasting value.

When Jesus talks about treasure and pearls, these are real treasures.

The treasure is there, but not everyone will seek it, of those who find it, not everyone will purchase it. Not all are willing to pay the price.

This is about priorities. What is the most important thing? What is number one, numero uno?

The frazzled father in the cartoon, fretting over family finances, informs his wife and 7 children, I'm going to have to let two of you go. A horrifying thought if it were true, but you and I know how it works. Our treasures are our family, something else must be sold for their sake, in fact everything could be sold for their sake if required.

#2—what are proper priorities?

Purchasing what is of greatest value requires discipline and sacrifice.

Priorities demand giving something up—only one pearl, but the one of greatest value.

Jesus commends the attitude that acts when the opportunity comes. When the buried treasure is discovered, when the pearl is found, those involved act quickly to give up everything else in order to possess what is most valuable. We must order our priorities and give preference to the most important. Confucius said, "A scholar whose mind is set on truth, but who is ashamed of bad clothes and bad food, is not fit to participate in the discussion."

Jesus' highest good is not abstract, indefinable, nor unknowable. The kingdom of God reigns supreme over all else.

The kingdom of God is not something you just believe in. The Christ is not just an option to fill our leisure time with enjoyment and pleasure. The church is not something you just believe in. It is something to which you give yourself, heart/soul/mind/strength. Genuine priorities demand all of the resources.

#3—The result is surprising.

The result is joy.

Conclusion

What do you really want in life?

What are you willing to give up, in order to obtain what you say you want?

I would give my life to know the Bible like he does... "That is exactly what he gave."