

Come and Listen (A Sermon Series on the Parables of Jesus)
How Much is God's Kingdom Worth to You?
Matthew 13:44-46

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Text Introduction: We are in a series for the summer on the Parables of Jesus. Jesus was a master story teller. People of Jesus' day were not really any different from people of today in the sense that they related to stories. Jesus took these stories using the familiar things of everyday life in the first century to capture the attention of His listeners.

When we encounter parables in the Gospels, there are a few basic interpretative principles that we must employ in order to get the real meaning of the text.

1. Understand the purpose of all parables. The literal meaning of the word parable is "to throw beside" or "to set beside." Jesus used parables to throw beside a teaching or an instructive principle. That leads us to the second consideration.
2. We must seek to understand what that principle is. "What is the main point" is the question we should be asking. Most times, if not all times, there is something in the context that reveals precisely what the main point is and the story simply illustrates that main point.
3. Because we are looking for the main point, it is also important to understand that we need not press the details of the story. issue with every detail of the story, but rather seek to get the main point.

Come and listen to the Parable of the Hidden Treasure and of the Priceless Pearl.

Text: ⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

Introduction:

Forrest Fenn is a veteran of the Vietnam War. After retiring from his military career, he made a fortune as an art dealer. Supposedly, in 2010, then an 80 year old Fenn hid a box of treasure worth, as he estimates, 2 million dollars. He says he did so to give people hope. He also says that he wanted to do something to get kids out of the house and off of the hand held devices into the great outdoors. He offered clues in a 24 line poem. Now before you head off to "google" the poem and miss the rest of my sermon, just know that he says he hid this treasure chest somewhere between Sante Fe, New Mexico, and Canada. I've been to Santa Fe. I didn't feel close to Canada. In fact, there is a 1,000 miles between the two.

It is estimated that 350,000 people have ventured off in search of Fenn's treasure. Some are extreme in their search. Ricky Idlett, a steamboat operator from Mississippi, confesses that he spends 12 hours a day researching the clues that Fenn has left in his poem.

Ah, the power of searching for that which is considered to be of value. These numbers are nauseating, but for a bit of perspective, consider just some forms of gambling in our state.

- Riverboat Gambling—over 23 million admissions in the most recently reported fiscal year with 1.9 B dollars gambled.
- Land Based Casinos—4.7 million admissions with 293 million gambled. (Does not include the Native American Casinos on Reservations in LA)
- Video Poker—13,160 devices to play on in 1,798 locations. Revenue was 1.85 Billion
- Another 454 million played on Louisiana Lottery games.

Again, the power of searching for that which we think will change our lives.

Matthew 13 is a treasure trove of parables about that of infinite, matchless, incomparable value—the Kingdom of God. Jesus introduced the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:33 is pure spiritual gold. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”

Here in our text today are two separate parables that essentially say the same thing. The only difference really in the two short stories is that in the first, the man is not looking for treasure, but in the second, he is. In searching for God, some people find Him after intensely searching. They ask questions. They struggle. They read. Other times, the discovery is more sudden, more spontaneous. You weren't looking at all for a relationship with God. In either case, two points strike our hearts.

Nothing compares to Christ.

Both men knew instantly that they had found something that was incomparable in its value.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God will be like that.

Why can this be our claim?

- A personal relationship with God is possible through Christ.
- A permanent residence with God in Heaven is promised through Christ.
- Both are provided not because of anything that you have done, can do, or will do.

The value of this relationship to Jesus is tied to joy. Therefore, when we lose the joy, we have to realize that we have lost sight of the value.

Listen to the Apostle Paul's testimony:

But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ..." Philippians 3:7-8.

If nothing compares to Christ, nothing should keep us from Christ.

It is incomprehensible that we would not forsake all for the kingdom of God. This is the common response of both men in the parables. They were not cautious. They did not seek to diversify their portfolios. They were all in. Everything they had was invested in their new found discovery.

Our relationships to Christ must model this activity. He has no rival. He has no equal. Nothing compares to Him.

The response of the first followers of Jesus was to leave everything and follow Him.

So What?

- Seek God's Will for Direction.
- Seek God's Word for Instruction.
- Seek God in Worship for Relationship.

How do I know that I am seeking His kingdom first? We ask ourselves these questions. Do I seek God's will first? Do I seek God's word first? Do I seek Him first?

On June 8, 2017, Jeff Murphy, a 53 year old from Illinois, went missing in the Yellowstone National Park. Rescuers found his body the next day. He had fallen, investigators estimate, about 500 feet. His wife confirmed that he had been searching for Fenn's Treasure. He is the fourth known person to have died searching for the treasure.

What does today find you searching for with all of your heart? If it is anything but the Kingdom of God, you are wasting your time.