

LESSONS FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH - The Parables - Pt 8
Sunday, September 19th, 2021, 6:30 p.m. - Teaching # 2128
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FINDING JOY WHEN YOU FIND JESUS

Matthew 13:44-46 - “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. [45] “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, [46] who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

When I was still in Bible College one of the large North American para-church organizations launched a huge evangelistic campaign designed to attract the attention of the unchurched in our communities. Christians all across Canada were given little buttons that read, “**I Found It!**” The idea was as you wore your button to work or to the mall people would be curious enough to come up to you and ask, “Found what? What did you find?” And you would then, at their own request, have a wide open door to tell them that you “found” Jesus Christ, and they could too.

Whatever good was accomplished in this, there is something incomplete about that kind of presentation of the gospel. I think you can see, as we study through these parables in Matthew thirteen, Jesus deals with this whole subject of ***how the kingdom (salvation in all its dimensions) begins in our hearts.***

The parable of the four soils teaches us most people (three out of four) don't receive the seed - the message of the kingdom - deeply enough. It doesn't actually stay rooted in their lives. There is no power or fruit. There is no staying power.

The parable of the sower of weeds among the wheat teaches us there is serious opposition to the kingdom by the enemy - Satan. Jesus braces His followers for the kind of real world they will have to live in until He comes again.

Then, in these little "treasure parables", Jesus underscores the fact that just **finding** the kingdom isn't enough for anybody. Both the farmer and the business man **found** something special. One found it by accident and one by searching. But after those differences the message is the same. **Finding** the treasure is nothing in and of itself. **Possessing** the treasure is what it's all about. And if there is anything Jesus is highlighting here, it's this: ***When it comes to life in His kingdom, there is a world of difference between finding it and possessing it.***

Here are some of the lessons these two brief parables join to teach:

- 1) **FINDING CHRIST IS THE GREATEST, MOST JOYOUS DISCOVERY A PERSON CAN EVER MAKE**

This is true whether one finds Him almost by accident (like a farmer digging in the ground might bump into buried treasure) or at the end of a long search (like a pearl merchant, traveling the world looking for that one special gem). Jesus is saying ***finding Him is the one discovery that separates itself from all other encounters.***

Encountering Christ makes everything else you have lived for seem small. We are meant to see the ***sheer excitement***, the ***unbounded joy***. The search ***ends*** for both these men because they know there is ***nothing else comparable to search for anymore.***

Is that your assessment of Christ? Is your relationship to Him what gives your life its deepest pleasure? Is your service to Him the source of your most profound satisfaction? Does your work give you more meaning than your faith? Does wealth bring more zeal to your day than the thought of heaven? Do you look forward more to Saturday than Sunday? Do you read the sports page for fun and the Bible out of duty?

If an outsider were to come and ask your children, ***“What gives your mom and dad the most pleasure in this world?”***, would they say, ***“They just live for the things of God. They can’t seem to get enough when it comes to pleasing and serving Jesus. They’re fanatical about His kingdom. You can’t pry them away from that one goal of putting Christ’s kingdom above everything else. I mean, sure, they love the boat and the trips to Europe, but nothing lights up their lives like the things of God and spending time in His service! They’d drop everything else in a heartbeat.”***

Those aren’t insignificant questions. They speak much about what is happening in your heart. Listen to how Paul describes his Christian life after years of following the Lord:

Philippians 3:7-8 - **“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”**

Notice the tenses Paul uses with his verbs in those verses. First, in **verse 7**, when he first came to Christ - “**I counted those things as loss...**” Now, after years of serving His Lord, in **verse 8** - “**I count all things to be loss...**” He **reminds** himself. He keeps his heart in exactly the same spot as when he first started out. There’s been no diminishing of passion or cooling of zeal.

That’s the description of a man who found the **treasure** of the kingdom. And these two men in Jesus’ parables meet with His whole-hearted approval. Jesus is saying, “Here is a person to pattern your life after. Here is a person who **knows what’s worth possessing in life.**”

2) THE HEART ONLY HAS ROOM FOR ONE ULTIMATE TREASURE

The farmer must **sell everything else** before he can buy the field. The pearl merchant must **sell everything else** before he can buy the pearl of great price. **Finding** this treasure is **easy**. **Possessing** it is **costly**. Jesus could tell these stories any way He wanted. But in each case, He deliberately put the cost of the treasure and the pearl **just high enough** so neither purchaser could own them without giving up everything else first. **That’s what it costs to follow Jesus. That’s what it costs to possess the kingdom.**

This truth is made especially clear with the parable of the pearl merchant. The parable makes clear that this man had already built quite a business purchasing other gems. **Verse 45** says he already had come across and purchased quite a few other fine pearls. And he was out to acquire more.

That's why he was on this search. He had planned to find more gems and add them to his collection. But when he came across this particular pearl, he realized he had to arrange special financing. It was of greater worth than he had anticipated. He actually had to ***sell all his previous purchases to close the deal.***

The treasure can't be held along with many ***other*** treasures. The pearl can't be put on the display shelf along with several other pearls. Jesus only leaves room for an ***all consuming passion*** for His rule in our lives.

This kingdom won't be had by those who merely like it. It won't be had by those who merely wish for it. Those desires are far too low and passive and cool. The kingdom is within reach, but it requires unflinching devotion.

3) **TO POSSESS THE KINGDOM YOU MUST FIRST ESTEEM ITS TRUE VALUE**

According to the Scriptures, this is quite a problem for fallen mankind:

Isaiah 55:1-2 - “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. [2] Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”

The problem isn't that people don't know they have needs. It's not that they don't know they are empty inside. That much they know. ***What they lack is a true understanding of what will satisfy their souls.*** They settle for far less than they should. They waste their time and resources on what is temporarily appealing, but ultimately worthless.

This pearl merchant was just the opposite. He could spot a gem when he saw it. He knew instantly that this one pearl was of greater worth than all the others put together.

That's why Jesus is so obviously pleased with him. This merchant could tell the difference between what had value and what was worthless. And, more important, he could tell the ***best*** from the ***second best***. He could distinguish between what was merely ***good*** and what was ***excellent***. He refused to settle for second best.

Paul prayed for the same discernment in the church: **Philippians 1:9-10** - “**And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ....”**

Notice how Paul calls this ability to discern true excellence the “**real knowledge**” that Christians must grow in. This knowledge is more important than a knowledge of math or science. It’s more necessary than a knowledge of business or commerce. It will stand you in better stead when Jesus comes than a knowledge of history or the arts.

Do you know what is the **very best** in life? Have you streamlined your life to pursue what will beautify your soul and glorify God? Do you know how to see through the false aspirations and goals of the crowd? Can you keep your life focused on what is excellent?

Here’s one thing I know for sure. **Small minded Christians** focus on what is **allowable**. **Those who want to live close to the throne of God** focus on **what is most excellent**. That’s the virtue Jesus was praising in these two brief parables.

4) **JOY IS THE FUEL FOR SACRIFICE**

Matthew 13:44 - “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

True, there is sacrifice in those words. But there is something else even more important. The clue to everything is found in those three words - “...*in his joy*...” He sells all he has “*in his joy*” - that is, ***from joy over the surpassing value of the treasure.***

Joy is the fuel for sacrifice. Joy is the fuel for holiness. People don't sacrifice for the kingdom because you tell them to sacrifice for the kingdom. People don't keep the rules of holiness because you tell them to keep the rules.

This whole sermon goes back to its very first point. ***Either you see Christ Jesus as the greatest treasure of life or you don't.*** That's the first step. If you don't value Christ, you won't serve Him. You will only obey Him when you need something or want to look good.

Go back to the parable of the four soils and you'll see this same truth all over again. Most people don't see the preciousness of the seed of the kingdom. Some are hard and indifferent to it - like wayside soil. Some won't budge in areas under the surface of their lives - like the rocks under the shallow soil.

Others won't part with the thorns and weeds that choke out the beauty and power of the Word of God in their lives. That means they **value the things of this world and the glitter of riches as much as they value the truth of the kingdom.**

But in one soil out of four, Jesus said the seed was received with **understanding**. That is, it was assessed at its true value and worth. **Room was made for it** in the heart. Just as these two men in Jesus' parable sold all they had to possess their treasures. And when that attitude - that kind of heart - is brought to Christ, nothing else will stand in the way of glorious, fruitful, Christian living.

Over and over again, bring your heart back to the simple beauty and love of Jesus. Read the Word until you start to marvel at the greatness and majesty of God. Wait on your knees until the Holy Spirit allows you not just to **know** these truths, but to **taste** them. You can't live this kind of life **mechanically**. You need to be moved upon by the Spirit of God until your heart is changed.

For most of us that involves three practical steps. ***First, rid your life of competing affections.*** You will never seriously pursue God when your life is stuffed with other pursuits. ***Second, spend far more time alone with God in prayer and the Word.*** You can't begin to love what you don't even know. Give the Holy Spirit something to work with in terms of increasing spiritual appetite. ***Finally, confess and make a clean break with anything you know is wicked or sinful in your life.*** God will not meet with people who cherish sin.

Those three steps will at least start you on your way to discovering the joy of the treasure of the Kingdom of God.