

2020 July 26<sup>th</sup> Sermon, Matthew 13v44-52

The football season has come to a climax. Liverpool and Leeds are triumphant. For many different people this is a cause for celebration. They have worked hard at achieving a goal.

They have been led by coaches who has inspired them and given them confidence, No doubt along the way they have made sacrifices to achieve a dream.

Today we have heard three parables of the Kingdom, the first two, are the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of great price. Jesus uses these to tell us that to gain the prize of the Kingdom is both costly and expensive.

**COSTLY** – to own the treasure, the whole field must be bought, to have a right to the treasure.

**EXPENSIVE**- to buy the purest pearl, it costs the merchant to sell everything else to have the one pearl.

Jesus says the Kingdom of heaven is LIKE this, it is worth so much more to us, its worth is letting go of all we value in comparison to being in the Kingdom of God.

What a challenge, what a goal to achieve, what an aspiration!

Now if we think that is challenging, then wait till you hear the third parable. This also demands our attention.

Just as Leeds is triumphant to rise up to the Premier Division, so some team must fall down to make space for them.

The third parable Jesus tells is about a FISHING NET that catches everything, the good and the bad. And only when the net is full and pulled in will it be sorted. Two choices is the fish worth keeping or is it thrown away. OUCH.

We don't like this, the idea that there is judgement on our lives and actions. BUT it is a theme that runs through the Bible and Jesus doesn't ignore it in the Gospels.

This years gospel, Matthew, has a number of parables of judgement warning us that ultimately all lives will be sifted, judged and called to account.

We find this unsettling, and so we should, for Jesus didn't come to reward our complacency, or commend our easy going faith. RATHER he came to call us forward to be the Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven. A kingdom of compassion, of reconciliation and forgiveness, a kingdom of honour to Jesus the King, the king who has done everything for us to live in his kingdom.

With this in mind we need to think again, about the first two parables again and look at them, not from our earthly perspective, but from a heavenly one.

In both the parables the seeker sells everything they have to gain the hidden treasure or the pearl of great price. So with a heavenly perspective, we need to see that the seeker of the Kingdom is Jesus.

Jesus is the one who gave up his heavenly throne to come to earth as a baby.

Jesus is the one who sees treasure in you and me, buried in our hearts, he sees pearls of great price in every person.

Jesus is the one who pays the ultimate price for this treasure, by giving up his life on the cross.

Jesus dies for our failings/sin, and rises to new life, that is the story of Easter.

Jesus is the one who pays the price of the kingdom that we might be for God, the pearl of great price, the price of his son. AND THAT MY FRIENDS IS GOOD NEWS, the good news of the Kingdom. As the Hymn says, "The price is paid, the battle won, now is the Victors triumph won"

Jesus has paid the price and opened the Kingdom. This heavenly perspective is what we need to know, GOD IS FOR US, and we need to tell others what God has done for them. They are the treasure, they have the pearl buried in them that needs to be discovered.

The first reading from Romans 8 [26-end] ably illustrates this point. In previous weeks we have heard Paul grappling with theological points, but this week he comes into clarity of thought that we can easily understand.

V31 If God is for us who can be against us

V32 He who didn't spare his only son, but gave himself up for us all.

PLEASE read this passage again in your own time and marvel at how this illustrates the heavenly perspective of the kingdom. That if we are alive in Jesus, we have nothing to fear. We are forgiven, redeemed, made new.

If we are living the Kingdom on earth in all its fullness of love and compassion with Jesus as King of our lives, then we don't need to fear judgement day.

Too often we're striving to reach up to God, that we forget that God has reached down to us in Jesus. He has won the victory, he has put the ball in the back of the net, he has lifted the trophy and is victorious in heaven.

Friends if we are alive in Jesus, then we're in the Kingdom, and we need to complete what Jesus has started in finding the pearl of great price in peoples lives so they know that they are loved and forgiven, and so we work with Jesus to build his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen