

Our passage today follows verses where Jesus explains a parable of the weeds to his disciples. They have been struggling to understand Jesus' message. It's a vivid and a bit frightening explanation of the final judgement. Jon talked about this last week. Heaven and hell.

The Church has used this picture to great effect.

All the parables in chapter 13 of Matthews gospel teach us of the Kingdom of God. The spiritual realm where God rules and where we share in His eternal life.

These 2 verses are describing/explaining the kingdom of heaven and its worth.

For us these small stories are strange..

Who goes randomly digging in a field? Why?

And why would anyone want an extremely valuable pearl? Unless you were going to sell it for more money?

Let's start with the man randomly finding treasure in a field.

What was he doing in a field that wasn't his?

In the time of Jesus, it was common to hide money/treasure . There were no banks. And the political turmoil and poverty at that time made everyone vulnerable to being robbed or stolen.

So, anything precious and valuable was hidden. To hide it, a hole must have been dug. Maybe some animals had disturbed it.

To be controversial, maybe the man had heard about some treasure in the field and decided to investigate.....We don't know. But Jesus says it was found.

Of course, the treasure belonged to the owner of the field. Local laws and customs said if it remained buried it belonged to the owner. If removed it was the property of whoever owned the land.

Treasure couldn't simply be taken - that would be theft.

If sold, anything buried on the land became the new owners' property.

There is not much detail in this parable.

Jesus wasn't pointing out the laws of the time but highlighting that the kingdom of heaven is worth trading in everything a person owns in order to obtain it.

In Matthew 19 Jesus tells a young rich man who asks what good thing he needs to do to get eternal life. Jesus responds with the 10 commandments. When the young man says he has kept the laws, Jesus tells him to sell everything and give the money to the poor. Exposing the man's weakness and in reality his idol...money and wealth.

What do we put before God?

What is most important to us?

Who or what is our idol? What is our treasure?

In 2017, at New Wine, I went to a seminar called Good Grief. My mum was sick. Things were bad, and I needed some words of wisdom and comfort.

Malcolm Duncan talked openly and honestly of his experiences of grief and loss. Many personal tragedies made his talk transfixing because of his honesty and vulnerability.

But the statement towards the end stunned me.

Made me sit up and change my perspective.

He explained that in the trauma of recent loss he prayed,  
'Please don't let me bury someone else that I love for a while.'

Gods answer...a whisper in Malcolm's soul,

*Malcolm, you will never bury the One you love most.*

*He has died, and risen again, and will never die. You will never attend His funeral.*

*You will never mourn at His graveside. You will never need to say goodbye to Him because He will never leave you.*

*Your problem is that you do not love Him in the way you think.*

*You have allowed all the other loves in your life to become more important than Him.*

*Until you fix that, you will continue to struggle with death and the loss of those you love.*

*When you fix it, you will be able to bury anyone.*

In his book, Good Grief, Malcolm writes how he was 'undone'.

It was an unexpected response but, it was true and he admits that his family and others had become more central in his life than God. He had allowed them to become idols.

You may find this extreme, and I was floored by his statement.

But, we are not to love our families and friends **less**, but they are not to be central..the most important. In fact, Malcolm went on to say that when God became the centre it resulted in loving family more. An expansion of love.

What is the idol/treasure in our lives?

Is there another love in our lives that has taken the central place? Jesus' place?

The treasure that was found; was recognised as treasure of great value.

Of so much value that the man sold everything to buy the field.

This is what the kingdom of heaven is like.

It is more valuable than anything else.

The man knew the value of the treasure and recognised it as worth more than he had.

It was too great to leave and forget.

**The Kingdom of Heaven IS the treasure.**

The second parable of the pearl confirms the value of the kingdom of heaven.

In the time of Jesus, pearls were prized gems.

Treasure seekers searched the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean for these precious things.....It is interesting to know that not all oysters produce pearls and they are caused by an irritation inside the shell.! That's another talk!

The difference in this story is that the man was actively searching for this pearl of great value.

He knew what he was looking for.

He recognised its worth.

And he also gave up everything to claim the new found treasure.

So what does all this mean for us today?

Do we recognise the kingdom?

It is here and now. It is being in relationship with God.

Recognising His Kingship and trusting in Him.

Do we value it? Do we see its worth?

Do we have other things central in our lives, like the rich young man?

These men in our short parables today, joyfully gave up everything to gain the treasure. They recognised it and valued it beyond anything else.

In Matthew 6, after the familiar verses of Jesus saying 'Do not worry..' He says 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, AND all these things will be given to you. Therefore do not worry...' verse 33  
Jesus was telling us to seek God first, turn to him for help, fill our thoughts with his desires and his character for our template of how to live and serve him.  
HE needs to be first place in every area of our lives.

I pray that each one of us would continually seek God in our lives.  
Put Him front and central.  
Seek His guidance.  
Hear His voice.  
And celebrate His action in our lives.

Let's pray,

Father,  
You are the prize.  
The great treasure.  
Be the King in our Hearts.  
In every moment of our lives may we know your presence, feel your peace and accept your grace.  
Thank you for your extravagant love for us.  
Amen

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