

The Treasure and the Pearl
Stories to Live by—part 4
Matthew 13:44-46
March 6, 2016

DAY 1: The parable of the buried treasure

1. Jesus tells a simple two-sentence parable that we'll look at today and tomorrow.

*Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and **then in his joy** went and sold all he had and bought that field.*

2. During Israel's history, it was not uncommon for there to be war, or worse, an invasion, and people taken off to captivity. When war broke out, people often hid their money and valuables in a large clay jar and buried it in the ground, out of sight.

3. The man in the parable is digging in some random field. We aren't given any details, other than that no one else saw what he saw!

4. After he discovered the buried treasure, what did he do next? ***hid it again***

5. Imagine yourself in the parable. You've just discovered the equivalent of the "Mega Million" winning ticket. It somehow fell into a pot with valuables, and apparently is lost. The owner of the property has no idea what is buried on his land. Only you do.

6. You find the owner and begin negotiating on the purchase of that property. The owner gladly accepts your generous offer. To come up with the price of the property requires you to sell *everything* you own; your house, your cars, and your furniture. You liquidate your retirement account, paying the taxes and pre-penalty fees. You liquidate your savings account. You move into the local motel room, at a weekly rate. You bike to work—in the rain.

7. Why would you do all that?

8. It is a simple matter of **value**, or "math." All your previous possessions, even added together don't come close to the value of the treasure you discovered.

9. Read the parable again. The key word in the parable is joy. Everything he found joy in before this day suddenly faded badly in comparison. What is your real hope for joy? Is your real hope for joy rooted in the next _____; and the next, and the next...? Or is it finding a kind of joy in God that you can find nowhere else? Jot down what strikes you about this topic. ***Finding true joy in the Lord is difficult and comes with a cost.***

DAY 2: Not settling for lesser joys (the meaning of the parable of the treasure)

*Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then **in his joy** went and sold all he had and bought that field.*

1. Today we zero in on the concept of joy.

2. As Christians, it is easy to yet again, misplace our real hope for joy in lesser things.

a. Blessings, as we define them: a happy marriage, healthy kids, good job, bills paid, etc. While those things are things to enjoy, none of them are our real basis of joy. Each of them can go "south" in a heartbeat.

b. Sometimes we define joy as "feeling close to God." While that is unquestionably a delectable joy it also seems to be an elusive joy. Certainly God could make this more of a reality for us, but He doesn't. Perhaps He is out for a greater and deeper joy for us to experience!

3. Which begs this question: just what *kind* of joy did the man experience in our parable? **Earthly** How would you describe his joy? **Short sighted** What reasons can you think of for his joy? **Self satisfaction**

4. This is not the joy of immediate satisfaction. It is **anticipatory** joy. He had yet to buy the field. He had yet to sell everything he had. But, as he was selling all his property he **had** joy! Why?

5. Instead of anticipatory joy, human nature chases another "joy:" immediate happiness, even when it comes at the cost of spiritual or deeper joy.

6. When we settle for a lesser "joy" that salves an immediate need, we are never driven to God to experience deeper joy.

7. What significance do you attach to the man having to sell everything he had in order to gain something of far richer value? Is there a parallel in our lives of having to give up lesser pleasures in order to gain deeper joy?

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: The parable of the pearl of great price

*Matthew 13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of **great value**, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."*

1. These two parables share the same basic theme: the kingdom of heaven, what God has for you and me is of far more lasting value than anything we've had up until now.

2. The immense value of the pearl, like the treasure, meant the selling of everything he had in order to gain something of far greater value.

3. There are some subtle differences in the parable. The man who discovered the treasure seemed to do so quite by accident. He was, in the words of C.S. Lewis, "surprised by joy."

4. The merchant of pearls was *searching* for pearls of greater value.

5. When you think of your experience with joy, which of the men do you relate to the most?

a. The man who accidentally discovered the treasure? Surprised by joy? Or,

b. The merchant of pearls who had been searching for a long time?

6. Joy is not just an isolated characteristic. It is also the pleasant result of many things related to the gospel. For instance, when I began to discover the wisdom of the scripture, the wisdom that spoke truth about God, about life, about human nature, relationships and about Christ's love and work in our hearts, that began a different kind of joy!

Proverbs 3:13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding,

14 for the gain from it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold.

15 She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

7. What things does the Psalmist relate to both wisdom and the happiness that we can experience?

DAY 4: The search for joy (the meaning of the parable of the pearl)

*Matthew 13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of **great value**, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."*

1. What gets in the way of experiencing joy in the Lord? Oftentimes, it is our stubborn commitment to feel good at any given moment, now! In what ways do you sense a stubborn commitment to your own satisfaction, "accomplished" your way?
2. When satisfaction depends on us and our ways, we will inevitably find the process quite elusive. It will lead us to greater and greater grasping for what is not ours to have. Have you seen this downward cycle in you?
3. Instead, God exposes our core commitment to our satisfaction, filled our way, as a bankrupt method of filling the heart. Surrendering "our ways" of happiness leads us to a greater hunger, not for more immediate happiness, but a deepening hunger to know God and to reveal Him to others in the way we relate to others.
4. The long narrow road of life involves brokenness, the breaking of our stubborn, tenacious commitment to satisfaction on our terms.
5. When the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem after the exile, someone found the ancient Old Testament writings. They spent the day publically reading from the scriptures. When the people heard the word of the Lord they wept.

Nehemiah 8:9 And Nehemi'ah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.

*Nehemiah 8:10 Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, **for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**"*

6. What struck you most from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Letting go in order to gain: the example of Paul

1. While Paul could be joyous in prison, I can be miserable in a Jacuzzi. The simplest difference is this: what is my real, real hope for joy?
2. Paul illustrates the parable of the treasure and the pearl brilliantly! He "sold" everything he had in order to find a greater treasure! When I say "sold" I don't mean like the man who found the treasure or the pearl merchant. For us, to "sell everything" means "letting go" or surrendering our former routes to happiness.

*Philippians 3:7 But whatever **gain** I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

2. The "gain" Paul is describing was basing his life, importance and value on his past heritage and his present works. But at his conversion to Christ on the Damascus Road, he experienced what the man who discovered the treasure learned. What he discovered in Christ was of far greater value. This lesson continued to deepen the rest of his life.

Philippians 3:8 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 refuse, in order that I may gain Christ

3. Paul amplifies on v. 7. Jot down your thoughts next to each of his phrases, below:
 - a. "I count everything as loss" –
 - b. "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ" –

- c. "I have 'suffered' the loss of all things (similar to "counting" everything as loss) –
- d. I "count them as refuse (trash) ` -
- 4. Similar to both the man who discovered the treasure and the pearl merchant, joy wasn't his until he let go (surrendered, or "sold") what had been his former sources of joy to then enter into a completely different and deeper kind of joy.
- 5. Do you see God taking you through the cycle of "letting go" or surrendering fleshly joy for the sake of creating a greater hunger for Him and a greater joy rooted in Him?
- 6. What's your biggest take away from today's devotional?