

Sunday, February 14, 2021 am

TEACHINGS OF JESUS (36)
The Parables of Jesus (5)
The Parables of Hidden Treasure and Pearls
Matthew 23: 44-46

We are continuing our study of some of the parables of Jesus, as part of examining the teachings of Jesus. We have been noting the parables in Matthew 13 – a series of parables Jesus taught about the kingdom of heaven. In this chapter Jesus explained why He taught in parables. Then we have recorded 7 parables He taught – the first being the parable of the Sower, followed by the parable of the wheat and tares, the parables of the mustard seed and leaven, which dealt with how the kingdom was going to grow from very small to large in a short length of time. Today, we notice 2 more parables that are linked together – the parables of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price.

I. The Parables Explained

a. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (13:44)

- i. ***The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field*** – sources say that back then in Palestine, it was not uncommon for people to bury their valuables (treasured items) on their land. There was the concerns of robbers, insurrectionists and a corrupt government. While there had to be some banking (cf. Matthew 25:27), it was not as common as today. Nor would they have had the “safety deposit boxes” for valuables, and of course they had no electronic storage of funds, etc. So hidden treasures were more common. A great example of hidden treasure is the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran. While not a field, it illustrates the idea of hidden treasure. AND one of the discoveries was a copper scroll that listed 64 hiding places in Palestine where various treasures were supposedly buried (gold, silver, perfumes and scrolls).
- ii. ***A man found the treasure and hid it*** – until this person owned the property, he took measures to secure it so that it would come with the property. Consider someone who comes across a rare find that he has – he will take steps to protect it until he can sell it or do whatever. Or someone wins the lottery – he secures his ticket until he has a chance to turn it in to claim his prize (more on this in a minute).
- iii. ***With joy he sells everything he has and buys the field*** – often associated with buying a piece of property, the deed would include the property “and everything therein”. This person realizes the value of the treasure on that property and sells EVERYTHING he has to obtain it.
- iv. Was Jesus condoning unethical behavior? One might think that coming across a treasure and not revealing that to the seller is unethical. But consider the following:
 1. There could be legitimate reasons for selling the field WITH its content. Maybe the owner was dead and the treasure forgotten about. Maybe the seller didn't care about the treasure that was there – he didn't want the land or anything on it. As long as the sale was legitimate, it was not necessarily unethical.
 2. Consider also that the buyer acted honorably in purchasing the land. He didn't steal the treasure, but purchased the rights to it.
 3. MOST importantly, realize that this was NOT the point of this parable. This is an example of not reading more into the account than was intended. For example: I used the illustration of a winning lottery ticket above. Does that imply that I approve of the lottery? IF you know me, you know the answer to that.

And in case you do not, the answer is NO! I believe the lottery is gambling and sinful. But that doesn't change the point to be made. You protect your treasures. In this parable, Jesus was not talking about a "rags to riches" story, nor greed. He was emphasizing the value of the kingdom of heaven – that was the main point. More on this in a while.

- b. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (13:45-46)
- i. ***Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for a great pearl*** – pearls were among the precious gems of that time (and still so today).
The Bible makes many references to pearls and their value – Matthew 7:6 – do not cast your pearl before swine, 1 Timothy 2:9 – speaking of modesty, Paul notes women were not to make their beauty about how valuable their clothes and jewelry were (including pearls), and Revelation 21:21 which speaks of the 12 gates of the heavenly Jerusalem were each pearls. WE have here a merchant whose craft is trading fine Jewels and he has his eyes open for valuable treasures.
 - ii. ***He finds one pearl of great price and sells all that he has to buy it*** – he comes across that item that he has looking for all his life. He wants it so much he is willing to sell everything he owns to buy it.
 - iii. ***Again, this parable is not about greed, or foolish decisions, or the privilege of the wealthy*** – it is about the value of something. Keep the interpretation simple and in context.

II. The Parables Applied

- a. What do these parables have in common?
- i. The value of the kingdom – that is what Jesus is emphasizing here.
WE need to view the kingdom as more valuable than anything in this life.
Consider also the price paid to purchase this kingdom – Matthew 16:18-19, Acts 20:28 – He purchased the church with His own blood.
Matthew 19:21-22 – the rich, young ruler failed to see the true value of the kingdom of heaven.
 - ii. Both REALIZED the value of the kingdom – they appreciated what it was. Peter and John before the council as recorded in Acts 4:20-21 – they are clear that they will not stop preaching Christ and His kingdom; Acts 5:29 – when the apostles are arrested and about to be beaten – they stood up for that kingdom.
 - iii. Both were willing to give up everything to obtain it - When you consider all that Paul sacrificed you see one who appreciated its real value. Philippians 3:8 – he counted all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ;
- b. What is different about these parables?
- i. The parable of the hidden treasure is about someone stumbling across the valuable treasure of God's kingdom.
 1. Consider the example of **Saul (Paul)** Acts 9 – he is on a mission to persecute Christians and in meeting the Lord he changes.
 2. **The Philippian jailer** in Acts 16 - he is just doing his job and there is an earthquake. Now knowing who Paul is, he asks – What must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30-33)
 3. **Today** – there are people with sincere hearts who will consider the truth if they are introduced to it. All it takes is someone giving them an opportunity to hear the gospel, or even more importantly to SEE the gospel in action in your life.
 - ii. The parable of the pearl is about one who is looking.
 1. **Consider the Ethiopian Eunuch** – Acts 8:26-39 – He was reading from God's word. When it is explained, he responds

2. **Cornelius** – Acts 10:1-2 – he is devout, fears God, is generous and prays always. No wonder he immediately acts when he is given further instructions.
 3. **Someone out there is searching** – I believe in these troubled times there are souls who are bothered with the wickedness they see around us. They are searching for answers, and some are even searching for the truth in God’s word. When someone invites them to study, they will readily accept the invitation. And if convicted (by your example, teachings and demeanor), they will obey the gospel.
- c. What are we doing with this treasure?
- i. How valuable is the kingdom of heaven to me?
 1. Matthew 6:19-21 – where is your treasure?
 2. **Do you realize its value?** Far too many fail to appreciate the true value of God’s kingdom. They sort-of want to go to heaven. They kind-of serve Him now. Maybe they “go to church” and there is a list of sins they do not commit, but their lives indicate their commitment is not total.
Matthew 6:33 – be reminded that we are to seek FIRST the kingdom of God. God will not accept second place.
If we genuinely appreciate the kingdom of heaven, that will not be a problem.
 3. **What are you willing to give up for the kingdom?** Are you willing to sacrifice for the kingdom of heaven? What will you sacrifice? Will you walk away from ungodly practices? Will you give him – of your wealth, of your knowledge, your talents and your time? Will you give Him your HEART?
 - ii. What are we doing to help others find this treasure?
 1. **FIRST, is God able to use you?** I ask that, because one who is trying to serve 2 masters cannot be used by Him – Matthew 6:24.
 2. Whether they are searching or not! **Are you letting your light shine?** Philippians 2:15-16
 3. **Are you concerned enough about souls that you will make efforts to reach them?** 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, Matthew 28:19-20, Jude 22-23.
Obviously in this lesson we do not have the time to develop this point, but it is worthy of consideration.

Conclusion: Typically, the value of something is relative. You see that when you give a child an expensive toy and he plays with the box instead. What makes a diamond or a pearl valuable? It is the fact that we make such things valuable. In reality, gold is just a metal (rarer than others), and a diamond is just a gem, and a pearl is just a round bead – but we have made these things of great(er) worth.

But the kingdom of heaven is intrinsically more valuable than anything thing this world has to offer. It is about our eternal dwelling when this life is over. The tragedy of this is how far too many fail to appreciate its true value. But you don’t have to be in that number. Be one of the few who TRULY appreciates the value of the kingdom of heaven, and then live like it. Incidentally, those two things CANNOT be separated. So, what about you? What does the kingdom of God mean to you? Think about it!