

**\*\*Title: The Treasure and the Pearl: A Journey to the Kingdom\*\***

**\*\*Scripture: Matthew 13:44-46 (ESV)\*\***

Good morning, church. I want to welcome to those of you that are guests today. Thank you for hanging out with us today. It is our prayer that our church already feels like home to you.

If you are a guest I am so glad that you are here today. We would ask you to text the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you text that keyword to that number, you'll be sent a link back that will take you to a form to enter basic contact information. It then notifies us, and we have the privilege of following up with you.

Or if texting is not your thing you can stop by Guest Connect located in the lobby. We have a team that would like to meet you and give you a gift as a way of saying thank you for being with us this morning.

I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew Chapter 13.

We are currently in a teaching series called, "More to the Story."

We are studying a selection of Jesus' parables through the remainder of the summer. .

We have looked at the Parable of the Sower or of the Soils and the parable of the mustard seed

Last week we talked about the parable of the mustard seed, I want to revisit its main points as a refresher and reminder

### **The Parable**

Mustard seed... people would have been very familiar with it... grows to be large for the region

### **The point**

God accomplishes significant things from insignificant beginnings.

### **The Practice:**

God still uses insignificance to accomplish mighty things  
God is working even when we cannot see it  
What we sow now becomes massive later

We have **defined** what a parable is by saying that it is a teaching aid that teaches something unknown by relating it to something that is known.

To cast a spiritual truth alongside something that people would know.

It's an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

We again see two parables paired together to press on us all the more forcefully one point.

### **The Parable (today)**

Is In **Matthew 13**,

**\*\*Scripture: Matthew 13:44-46 (ESV)\*\***

**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.**

**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.**

So the two parables: a treasure and pearl.

Both speak of searching and finding, and both reveal the same general point.

But unlike the earlier parables, even though the pearl and treasure are unseen, the main point is not hidden, *growing power*.

**These parables focus on the surpassing worth of the kingdom.**

The treasure is hidden, to be sure, but the point is the treasure. The pearl was found, yes; but the story emphasizes its great value.

**Together these demand that we ask,  
What do I value above all else?  
What is it I simply must have?**

Page 2

**What do I love so much that I would give up all to have it?”**

The first man finds a treasure in a field. Eager to possess it, he sells all he has to buy the field and make it his own.

Parables convey heavenly truths with concrete stories; so I don't think that they are intended to be interpreted as literal events.

So we do not want to ruin the story by dissecting every detail.

At the same time, we may be misled about what this parable means if we picture a man walking around the neighborhood with a metal detector in his hands and headphones over his ears, until he finds a hidden treasure in someone's yard. Then he buys their house and cashes in on the reward.

In this parable He wasn't on a specific mission to find a treasure

Maybe a few details about life in those days will make more sense of this story.

First, there were no real banks in these days. Money, when it was had, was hidden, often buried on property which you may or may not own. Especially if you heard of an invading army, you would likely bury your valuables in a field.

Additionally, these were times when whole villages could be slaughtered in war or wiped out by disease. So though we should not think of it as common, it was not unheard of to find a treasure that someone had hidden decades earlier then died without digging up.

When Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field,” people nodded their heads. They knew about that; they could relate.

And when the man sees what he has, he knows its worth, and though he becomes impoverished to get it, he does so with joy.

Joy because what he will obtain is of such great value.

In contrast to this poor man who is surprised to find a treasure, the second man has some wealth; he buys and sells pearls.

This guy is more Like a baseball card collector who rises early every Saturday morning to visit the yard sales and dig through dusty boxes rescued from attics. Each day he pushes aside the piles of relatively worthless and mass produced cards until one day he discovers a 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle. And when he found it, he drained his savings to purchase the shoebox for \$10,000. The cost was high, for the seller knew the cards were valuable, but he did not appraise the '52 Mantle at its selling price of nearly \$300,000.

**Let’s notice, one relatively minor principle from these parables, then we will focus on the main point.**

*First, notice that God hides spiritual treasures in unexpected places.*

The reward of the kingdom of God is not out and obvious for everyone to see; it hides under the most ordinary of people and messages.

Scene in Screw-tape Letters where the enemy tells the junior tempter that he can dissuade his pupil from becoming a Christian by showing him people at church with rumbled and cheap clothing and bad breath. Lewis uses that idea to rebuke us for seeing only the outward and obvious things in people. Only a fool would imagine that the truthfulness of a religion could be judged by the dress and hygiene of the faithful, but the world looks on the outward appearance, and fails to see the treasure hidden in the heart.

The pearl of great value is also hidden in an ordinary place. The man searched for pearls, so finding one is no surprise. People saw those pearls every day. But they had become so used to them that they did not recognize one of extreme value.

So it is with the gospel. We can hear the message of Jesus at virtually every minute of every day in our country. Radio stations broadcast earnest preachers and television stations constantly air religious channels.

Additionally, the internet and books and church ministries offer the gospel call at every hour of every day. Yet, many who hear, do not hear; and many who see, do not see. The story of grace seems too common; the message too simple; the news too good to be true. And many pass by, searching for something more, something difficult, something demanding of me.

Yet it is there, all along. Hidden under some dirt or surrounded by other trinkets, few see it. God hides spiritual treasures in unexpected places.

**With that in mind, let's think about the main point: a Christian realizes that nothing he or she desires compares to the surpassing worth of the kingdom.**

There is a book entitled, *Give Up Your Small Ambitions*. I know nothing about it, other than the title fits here.

Most people have ambitions that are so small. What do people really hope to have in their lives? A job that makes enough money for a dinner out occasionally and a vacation once a year? A home to watch a few TV shows and enjoy time with the family? Children who stay out of trouble and marry and get good jobs. None of those are bad. But aren't they small?

**Sin shrinks my soul until I hope for too little.**

Then I pass by the field, never suspecting a treasure there. We walk through the market, never imagining one of the pearls of great value.

People rarely look intently, so we satisfy our souls with small ambitions.

**As a result, when we have problems, we usually see ourselves as sufferers needing a solution, not sinners needing salvation.**

We come to God when we have a hard test this week, or a sick relative we want healed, or a new job we really want, or a marriage problem that hurts. We are suffering – from fear of failing the test, from care for a hurting friend, from a bad job or a troubled relationship.

**We need a solution: a quick and dirty miracle. Like a genie in a lamp, we rub with a quick prayer or a trip to church, and expect God to pop out an answer.**

**And when he does not, we doubt.**

What if such solutions risked pushing us away from a far greater reward?

What if we are not, fundamentally and essentially, sufferers, but sinners?

What if we need, not a solution to a problem, but a whole life salvation?

What if God wants us to give up our small ambitions and admissions to give us a pearl of great value?

*John Calvin: "The excellence of the heavenly life is not perceived, indeed, by the sense of the flesh; and so we do not esteem it according to its real worth, unless we are prepared to deny, on account of it, all that glitters in our eyes."*

**With those thoughts, I want to suggest three applications:**

**First, Christianity requires a change in essence or intrinsic nature, not in degree.**

**Second, Christianity demands that we give up all other valuables.**

**Third, Christianity rewards with unimaginable splendor. Let's look at each briefly.**

**First, Christianity requires a change in our intrinsic nature, not in degree or small steps.**

To be a Christian is to enter a new reality, to join a new kingdom. There is no middle ground, no remaining worldly while we have some religious interests.

These are parables of the kingdom, which has a king, and that King is not me.

In essence, these parables are all about trading self-sovereignty for God-sovereignty. Either God is my master, or I am.

*Choose this day whom you will serve. Joshua 24*

No one can serve two masters; either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **Who is your king?**

This is where the sharpness of the gospel cuts hard against modern people.

Most Americans feel they are balanced and enlightened, suave and intellectual.

They may accept the Bible, along with other great spiritual writings. But press them on certain texts, and they admit that they do not believe or practice those.

I was reading the other day about a display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The display was an **86 page Bible**, created by Thomas Jefferson. In this severely abridged version, Jefferson says that he sought to remove passages "of vulgar ignorance, of things impossible, or superstitions, fanaticisms, and fabrications." Stories of angels, wise men, and the resurrection did not survive Jefferson's scissors.

Few people are so crass in their criticism of the Scriptures; they simply ignore what they dislike.

But note this: after Jefferson completed his editing of the Bible, he wrote to a friend that his version, "**It is a document in proof that I am a real Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus.**" Modern

people are just like Jefferson; they cut what they dislike and use the rest to prove their faith.

But note well who is king in this system. It is not the God who reveals himself in the Bible, but those who read it.

***Pastor Tim Keller said, "If there are not parts of the Bible that chafe you, then you are not reading it."***

Christianity requires a change in our intrinsic nature, not in degree.

**Entering the kingdom of God is not adding to your life some self-help techniques; it is relinquishing self.**

It is not choosing a few new truths to accept; it is finding Truth which makes everything else you thought a lie.

It is not trying harder to follow the king; it is the King's rescue of your life from prison. Christianity requires a change in our intrinsic nature, not degree.

**Second, Christianity demands that we give up all other valuables.**

The parables are different: one man is poor, the other well-off.

One is surprised by the discovery, the other was searching when he found it.

In one case the seller knows nothing of the treasure, in the other he apparently does.

**But in both accounts the hero sells all else for the prize.**

**Those who would obtain the kingdom must give up all other treasures.**

Now be careful here, lest we mistakenly assume that Jesus describes what we must do to **earn** the kingdom.

Many monks and spiritual zealot thinks that heaven can be purchased by selling all that one owns. However, it is not bought, but experienced by giving up everything else.

When we walk into a dark room we flip on the light. The switch is how we receive light, not generate it. The switch transfers power to the bulbs, it does not create power.

So too with the kingdom. We do not earn heaven by selling all else, but receive the reward when we do so.

Jesus is not asking what you are willing to lose to get the kingdom; he asks how we value what we gain. Do we treasure Christ?

Those who believe realize that selling all is not a loss, but gain. The kingdom comes with great reward.

There is joy in giving up all because it is all worthless, and in letting go we receive.

Many religious people remain far from Jesus for this precise reason.

He is not of infinite worth so they hold tightly to their treasures. True faith gives up all other “valuables.”

**Third, Christianity rewards with unimaginable splendor.**

Neither the man who sold all for the field, nor the one who sold everything for the pearl felt that he lost. Great was their reward! This is why you cannot buy your way into the Kingdom – the King rewards his subjects with more than they could ever give up.

**Matthew 19.29: Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.**

**Mark 8.35: Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.**

Many either cannot or refuse to see the treasure which is Christ, so they naturally pass by the field or never search for this rare pearl. This is what it means to believe. Not to pray a prayer or to claim to be a Christian or to attend church. But to treasure Christ

above all else. Do you believe that Jesus is the reward? Then you will sell all else to have him.

**Earlier I said that most people see themselves as sufferers needing God for a solution.**

**The Bible says we are sinners needing God for salvation. To get to the Biblical answer, we must give up both our small admissions and our small ambitions.**

**First, our small admissions.**

For many, admitting that I need help from God sounds like a lot. But it is small compared to the truth. We are spiritually dead, lost and running from God.

We do not need help; we need new life. We need rescue, salvation, a new way of thinking and feeling.

We need to be re-created, renewed, restored to a life consistent with our creation. Conversion to Christianity begins with admitting how bad things are.

The gospel says that we are worse than we would ever have imagined apart from the grace of God.

**Second, we must also give up our small ambitions.**

The gospel does not offer a little help, but a whole new life.

*C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity: "Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."*

*C. S. Lewis writes (The Weight of Glory): "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...."*

**Would we not let go of our trivial little pleasures, if we knew what the King had In store? This is what the kingdom is like.**

the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price remind us of the immense value of the Kingdom of Heaven and the wholehearted commitment it demands. As we journey through life, lets be open to

discovering God's kingdom in unexpected ways and be diligent seekers of His truth.

Lets prioritize our relationship with God above all else, embracing both the joy and the sacrifices that come with following Christ.

In doing so, we find true fulfillment, purpose, and the promise of eternal life.

And in the end we see the eternal significance of this giving up our small pleasure and ambitions, the eternal payoff is worth the journey

without the pressure, the tension on my life probably wouldn't have seen Jesus, so now i celebrate the pressure because the eternal payoff is worth the Journey.

**Missionary killed** Benghazi from Austin (teacher, family already home for Christmas he is gunned down on a morning jog)-- at some point having a meaningful life trumped have an easy life

***Letter from his wife-***

*My husband and best friend Ronnie Smith loved the Libyan people. For more than a year, Ronnie served as a chemistry teacher in a school in Benghazi, and he would gladly have given more years to Libya if unknown gunmen had not cut his life short on December 5, 2013.*

*Ronnie and I came to Libya because we saw the suffering of the Libyan people, but we also saw your hope, and we*



wanted to partner with you to build a better future. Libya was very different from what we had experienced before, but we were excited to learn about Libyan culture. Ronnie grew to love you and your way of life, as did I. Ronnie really was "Libya's best friend."

Friends and family from home were concerned about our safety, as were some of you. We talked about this more times than I can count. But we stayed because we believed the Libyan people were worth the risk. Even knowing what I know now, I have no doubt that we would both make the same decision all over again.

Ronnie loved you all so much, especially his students. He loved to joke with you, tell stories about you, help you with your lives and challenge you to be all that you could be. He did his best to live out his faith humbly and respectfully within a community of people with a different faith.

To his attackers: I love you and I forgive you.

How could I not? For Jesus taught us to "Love our enemies" – not to kill them or seek revenge. Jesus sacrificed His life out of love for the very people who killed him, as well as for us today. His death and resurrection opened the door for us to walk on the straight path to God in peace and forgiveness. Because of what Jesus did, Ronnie is with Jesus in paradise now. Jesus did not come only to take us to paradise when we die, but also to bring peace and healing on this earth. Ronnie loved you because God loves you. Ronnie loved you because God loved him – not because Ronnie was so great, but because God is so great.

To the Libyan people: I always expected that God would give us a heart to love you, but I never expected you to love us so much. We came to bless you, but you have blessed us much

more. Thank you. Thank you for your support and love for Ronnie and our son Hosea and me. Since Ronnie's death my love for you has increased in ways that I never imagined. I feel closer to you now than ever before.

I hear people speaking with hate, anger and blame over Ronnie's death, but that's not what Ronnie would want. Ronnie would want his death to be an opportunity for us to show one another love and forgiveness, because that's what God has shown us.

I want all of you – all of the people of Libya – to know I am praying for the peace and prosperity of Libya. May Ronnie's blood, shed on Libyan soil, encourage peace and reconciliation between the Libyan people and God.

Sincerely,

Anita Smith

## **End Letter**

sounds like someone not looking at the things that are temporary but at the things that last forever, like Jesus when he entered the manger its not going to be an easy 33 years and the end will be horrific grueling death but this is light and momentary affliction will produce a weight of glory

thats what it sounds like to trust God while we are waiting God is working there is something more to be had than an easy life

when you walk through the fire you gain a great personal ministry to a lost and broken world

Anita smith she went back to Libya she was mobbed by media and people wanting to know who she is that she would care so much for the reconciliation of the Libyan people

when we come through it and praise god people God wouldn't let me go under i am not the strong one but i have a strong one and the watching world sees that and wants to

hear about the God who brought us thru and that is the weight we get want to know why and how

forgiving Libyan what does that say for the gospel violence should be re-paid violence but she brings love, people will want to know who this lady is

People want to hear our stories of being brought through the fire because they are desperate and hurting and need the hope that we have to offer

Anita knew the value of the kingdom of God

**Philippians 3:8**  
**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**

**are you ready to meet Jesus face to face**

**me honestly i want more time to live a life with meaning**

what are you going to give him when you are face to face... tithes, a high five, sing how great is our god, the tithes we never gave him... we are in heaven walking on gold ..... how trivial haha

what do we get him... the magi bore gifts... we are to give Jesus gifts

when the stars aligned they knew something special had happened they studied stars... creation will lead you to Jesus

the magi immediately knelt before Jesus who is a boy at this point it took them a while to get there, gold murre franken... not cheap things these were big gifts

you don't go empty handed to meet the King

what are we going to give him...haven't thought that through...we should

i think we give him our crown...

when we arrive in heaven and see Jesus he will give us a crown

based not on our amazing talent or our ability to be perfect but based on our faithfulness to trust him in our life as sufficient loving god and to keep moving in the plan no matter what and based on that he will say well

done thy good and faithful servant and he will give us a crown

James calls it the crown of life

**James 1:12**

**Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.**

In revelation 24 elders with crowns fell down and cast their crowns at his feet

**Revelation 4:9-11**

**9** And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

**11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”**

Its us not taking the all about me path, make it better, make it easier, its us not loosing sight of both sides of the the promise and never giving up on me

well done heres a crown i reward it i applaud it all i never missed your faithfulness

Page 11

we give him the meaning that was our life... thanks for understanding this is not your home, never loosing sight of eternity, of being faithful.... God didn't miss a moment a tear a prayer, for knowing it wasn't your home, know it wasn't about you

then we say its not our crown its yours Jesus all that i have all that am is because of you my breath my life it is because of you

Its us trading everything like we see in these parables for the most valuable kingdom of God

all we have and all we are is because of God....

its really all i have at this moment to give to put at your feet

Thats the kingdom of God that the great value we see these men put forward

**We find Great value in an ordinary place - we find greatness in an ordinary holy life**

**An ordinary holy life— consistent, disciplined, prayerful life**

**I trust that God, through the Holy Spirit, has allowed the preaching of His Word to stir your heart this morning.**

I want to encourage you to reflect on how The Lord might be leading you to respond. For some, your

response would be to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, to be born again unto a relationship with Jesus.

For others it might be repentance. However you need to respond, I want you to know that following this service, our elders will be here at the front and excited to visit with you today.

**Let us pray**