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God's Kingdom: The Only Treasure Worth Having Matthew 13:44-52

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen. The word from God through which the Jesus speaks to us is Matthew 13

[Jesus said,] "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it. Due to his joy he leaves, sells all that he has, and buys that field.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he found one very valuable pearl, after going away, he sold all that he used to have and bought it.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like a seine net deployed into the lake and collecting some of all kinds of fish. When it was filled and they had drawn it up to the shore and sat down, they collected the good ones into containers, but the bad ones they threw out. So it will be at the end of the age. The angel will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. That's where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Do you understand all these things?"

"Yes," they say to him.

He said to them, "For this reason, every scholar who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like an owner of a household who brings out of his storeroom treasures new and old." (Matthew 13:44-52)

Dear friends in Christ, fellow saints washed clean in the blood of our risen Savior:

He had skill and talent, fame and fortune. He played comic roles as well as serious ones. Many enjoyed his movies. His life was a success. But although he could make others laugh and often laughed himself, none of this could bring Robin Williams true happiness. All the treasures of this world, all that the earthly heart cherishes, falls short.

But don't Christians also struggle with sadness and depression? Can't thoughts of despair and suicide afflict the Christian too? Yes, they can and do. And Christians can and should make use of the treatments and medications that God has blessed the world with. But we, dear friends, have treasure that the world cannot find. In fact, it's the only treasure truly worth having. What is this treasure? It's the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God.

Now don't get me wrong here. Having this treasure does not give us continuous happy feelings. It doesn't paint a smile on our face. As I already said, Christians do struggle with sadness. But what this treasure does is that even in our darkest moments it can bring us the light of hope.

God's kingdom: The only treasure worth having. That's the theme today. This

treasure is hidden and unique. This treasure is vital and inexhaustible.

A. It's hidden and unique

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a treasure hidden in a field. How many walked over it never realizing what they were missing? But for the man who found it, what a difference it made! It was worth more to him than all he had.

In the same way, God has not locked away his kingdom in some impenetrable vault. No one has to try to climb up to heaven to gain it. Rather by sending his Son, the Father brought his kingdom and its treasures down to us. All those treasures are right here in this book, the Bible.

Yet it remains hidden to so many. They may have a Bible or even read it regularly. They may value the Bible for its ancientness or its moral teachings. They may cherish how the Bible makes them feel or the childhood memories it brings back. But they are still looking only at field. They aren't seeing the treasure hidden there. In fact, many of the brightest and best dismiss the Bible as just another field, no more valuable than any other field. Who would ever sell all they had for an empty field?

But you, dear Christian, have seen the treasure. For the Bible has confronted you and me with God's holiness and our own sinfulness. How could we ever make ourselves right with God? How could we ever escape judgment and damnation?

But then the treasure chest opens, and we see our Savior. What joy! Jesus covers our sins with his righteous life. What joy! Jesus washes away your guilt with his blood poured out for you. What joy! Jesus has risen from the dead because God has declared you right in his sight. You are justified and forgiven. What joy! This all is God's free gift to you, bought without money or cost to you. What joy! Why wouldn't we joyful give up all else to have this treasure alone?

For this hidden treasure is unique. It's one of kind. It's like that priceless pearl the merchant found. He was an expert. He could tell the difference between what's good and what's better. Throughout his life he pursued the finest and best. But nothing he had seen was like this one. In fact, all the others together that he had accumulated were no longer worth holding on to. He sold them all to have this one priceless pearl. How unique it was!

So also there are many fine things in this world, such as peace and prosperity, justice, law and order, acts of charity, mercy toward others helping them improve their condition, the pursuits of medicine, the sciences, and the arts: music, literature, painting, sculpting, and more. Yet even the finest and noblest pursuits cannot compare to the kingdom of God and its treasure. That treasure is unique.

The Apostle Paul expressed it this way in Philippians 3: "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a lose compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Philippians 3:7-9 NIV84).

Now when it comes to the fine, good, noble, beautiful, and upright things of this

life, enjoy them as blessings from your heavenly Father, giving thanks to him. Don't view them as monuments to human achievement. Rather consider how you can use the best this world offers to the glory of your Savior so that his name is honored and his word is spread and believed. And as Jesus teaches in this parable, keep the proper priority and perspective. Even the best and finest pearls are secondary to the unique, one-of-kind pearl. In fact as the Apostle Paul pointed out, compared to knowing Christ, even the best and finest of everything else is rubbish. God's kingdom is truly the only treasure worth having.

For you see, dear friends, God's kingdom is not only hidden and unique, but it is also vital and inexhaustible.

B. It's vital and inexhaustible

How important is God's kingdom? How vital is it? The parable of the net answers that. The fishermen went out with a seine, or dragnet. Floats kept the top at the surface of the lake and weights sunk the lower end to the bottom. All kinds of fish were swept up in the net. In the same way, as the Gospel of Jesus is preached and shared all kinds of people are brought into the church.

Yet not all who are members of a congregation believe the Gospel. They know about Jesus and claim to believe in him. They act much like any other member. But in their heart they are still holding on to their own works, efforts, and righteousness. Since we can't look into the heart, we can't tell the difference. But the end of the age will make it all clear. The bad will be separated from the righteous and thrown into the fiery furnace of hell.

How vital not only to be drawn outwardly by the Gospel-net but also inwardly! Whose righteousness do you plead in God's courtroom? Your own efforts or Christ's perfect righteousness? Only the treasure of God's kingdom brings us Christ's righteousness. Do you see how vital it is? It's the difference between heaven and hell. So the parable of the net brings home that God's kingdom is the only treasure worth having.

And don't draw on this treasure sparingly, thinking you might use it up. God wants us to be continually use his treasure and share his treasure. For this treasure is inexhaustible. The more you use it the richer you become. Anyone trained as a disciple in God's word brings out treasures new and old, Jesus says. God's storeroom never empties.

So at all times, dear Christians, whether in gloom and sadness or in the light of happiness, look to the treasures of the kingdom. These riches bring us hope even in the darkest nights of our life. For God's kingdom is the only treasure worth having.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.