

Dear Friends in Christ,

In early January of this year, there was a remarkable treasure story was reported out of England. A piano tuner by the name of Martin Backhouse was tuning a donated piano at a community college in Shropshire, England, when he got the surprise of his life. Inside the piano hidden away he found several small packages wrapped in white cloth. There was also one leather drawstring bag. The wrapped packages and bag were filled with gold coins. There were 900 sovereigns dating between 1847 and 1915. The gold coins are worth a small fortune.

Have you ever dreamed of finding lost treasure? I believe that many people do. People still search for treasure in the Arizona desert and people eagerly consume books and movies about lost treasure.

Jesus uses our natural interest in treasure to illustrate a spiritual truth. He tells two parables or stories dealing with treasure. He wants us to hang on to spiritual treasure. Then he tells a third parable where he warns us of what happens if we don't value spiritual treasure. A fourth and final parable encourages us continue to learn about this treasure.

In our series of sermons about God's providence or providing today we hear that **He Provides Wisdom from on High**. He teaches us to value spiritual treasure.

1. Jesus teaches us the kingdom of heaven has the greatest treasure.

The kingdom of heaven in this chapter isn't so much a place as it is gospel activity. The gospel is proclaimed. Jesus wants all who hear the gospel to take steps to hang on to this great treasure.

A. The first two parables help us to visualize this by describing two men finding treasure.

1. In Jesus' day a rich man would hide a portion of his savings in a clay jar buried in a field. If he had to run for his life, because of an invading army, he would come back later and dig it up. We can guess that on some instances the man didn't make it back. Eventually, another man digging in that same field finds it by accident. Jesus describes this second man as selling all that he has and buying the field so he can claim the treasure.

Sometimes people as they “dig” or work their way through life are not looking for Jesus, but then they stumble on to him when the gospel is shared. They are stunned that a lifetime of sin and misbehavior is washed away in the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary’s cross. They are overjoyed that God loves them. They are willing to give up all their old sins, the things they use to count as important because now they have Jesus and the salvation he won for them. Our stories may differ, but we too have been given the kingdom of heaven and count it as precious.

2. The second man is wholesaler of pearls. He goes around looking for fine pearls to buy. He finds an extraordinary, one of kind, pearl. He goes and sells all that he has and buys the one pearl. He doesn’t need any other pearls, he has found the best.

The Jewish people of Jesus’ day used the word “pearl” to signify “words of wisdom.” Some people spend their lives searching not for gold or silver, but for words of wisdom so they can live a better life. They go to Plato, Aristotle and teachers like Buddha. They go for wisdom and insight.

St. Paul called Jesus “the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1) He said, “**The foolishness of God is greater than man’s wisdom.**” (1 Corinthians 1:25) The reason is that the words of men cannot take away sin, bring peace with God, the Creator, and promise everlasting life. However, the pearls of the Gospel found in the Bible do give these things. Only in the pages of Scripture do you find that the sins that stain your life, and which you cannot scrub away, are wiped away in the sacrifice at the cross of Jesus, the Son of God.

Like these men we want to do whatever it takes, give up whatever is necessary, so that we can hang on to the kingdom of heaven.

B. Not everyone takes this great treasure seriously, so Jesus issues a warning in the third parable. It is the parable of the net.

1. Jesus pictures the kingdom of heaven as a net. In the work of proclaiming the gospel all kinds of people are drawn in. The good fish are the righteous people who believe the message hold it in their heart. The bad fish are hypocrites, they come for the donuts, to keep peace in the family, or to hang around nice people. They may look like a regular Christian on the outside, but on the inside they don’t believe the Gospel.

2. The fisherman are the angels. At the end of the age they separate the believers from the unbelievers. These “bad fish” are going to be miserable, gnashing their teeth in hell, because they were so close to salvation. They

had the gospel in their lives, but in the end, it wasn't a treasure for them and so they miss out on salvation.

The application is simple. If someone sitting here or someone you know is being a hypocrite, now is the time to stop. Pay attention to the gospel message and what it means. Jesus knows people's hearts. He can't be fooled. Now is the opportunity to receive God's free grace in Jesus.

For believers Jesus' words are a warning to not become complacent, but give your attention to the Gospel which is so dear to you. Jesus encourage us more in this area as he continues.

2. Jesus teaches us that there is much to learn about the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus concludes his teaching at this point with a question and another parable. He wants to impress on his disciples that the proclamation of the gospel provides a huge treasure. There is a lot for us understand.

A. Jesus asks his disciples, **“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied.” (51)**

1. During their lives the disciples had learned about God's providence, angels and demons, Judgement Day, Heaven and Hell. They had also learned about God's mercy and the forgiveness of sins. Jesus had shared these “old treasures” and given fresh insights as they related to him, the Savior.

2. What was completely new to them was understanding Jesus had to die on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. What was also new was Jesus rising from dead and ascending into heaven. They would soon receive these new treasures and learn of their significance. They continued the process of learning and understanding throughout their life.

Some years ago, I was assigned a study of the New Testament book of Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 1-9. It was my turn to teach the pastors of our district this section of Scripture. I had read and studied it briefly in the past, but since I was due to teach it, I had to dig in to every word and phrase. I was surprised at the amazing depth of teaching about Jesus as the Son of God. I ended up with a paper of 20 pages! Please, don't ever feel you have learned everything there is to know about the Gospel. Be a student your whole life and enjoy that amazing treasure!

B. Jesus goes on to explain that every Bible teacher who has learned of the gospel will bring out treasures old and new.

1. The disciples were to take the word of God that they were familiar with as

well as the new things that they had learned and teach them to others. They were familiar with Old Testament prophecies. They were learning to see them fulfilled in a new way in Jesus. After Pentecost, the disciples would become the teachers. They were to share the “old” and the “new” with the people who listened to them.

2. As your pastor I watch what I preach. I use the regular series of readings most of the year because they take us back and forth through Scriptures. By doing this over a three year cycle, you get to hear most of the Scripture gems. Preaching on topics or having specially themes services is okay, but if a pastor does it all the time, you may end up hearing more of what he wants to tell you and not everything the Lord has to say.

Conclusion: There is the story of a man who went to visit and console his friend. His friend was in a position where he was forced to sell his house and leave. While the friend was visiting he noticed a rock that was propping open a door. The rock was filled with veins of gold. There was enough gold in the rock to pay off the man’s debt and let him keep the house. The solution to his crises was right under his nose and he didn’t know it!

We all need the gospel treasure. In the Gospel, we have forgiveness and salvation in Jesus. God brings it into our lives through the proclaiming of the gospel. It is right under are noses, especially when we are in church. God has given you this wisdom from on high. Hold it. Cherish it. Learn it. Amen.