

Grace, Mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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.

⁴⁷ “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied. ⁵² He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” **This is the Gospel of our Lord.**

Dear Members of the Kingdom of Heaven,

If I asked you to make a list of the 5 things you treasure the most, what would be on that list? If you are younger it might be a toy or video game or pet. If you are out on your own it might be a car or house or boat – some material thing you really like. But as you get older, your perspective changes. My list would include my children and grandchildren. It would include some cards I have received on special occasions. Certainly, I would include my wife on that list. I also have a few items from my past that aren’t worth anything but remind me of a different time in my life. Most of our treasurer may not have a lot of monetary value but they are priceless in our eyes for different reasons.

While we all have different things we treasure, Jesus uses a number of parables – illustrations – to teach us about **“Our Greatest Treasure.”** He wants to help us see that this treasure is, **“Something of Great Value.”** And it is also, **“Something to be Shared.”**

I. For the past few weeks we have been looking at some of Jesus’ parables as recorded in Matthew’s Gospel. These parables all talked about different aspects of the Kingdom of God. These verses before us contain four short parables and just like last week’s parable, they are about the Kingdom of Heaven. Remember that the Kingdom of Heaven, in this context, is the sphere of gospel activity – i.e. wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to God’s Word.

A. Jesus begins by telling us, **“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.”** During times of unrest, rich people often would divide their wealth into thirds. 1/3 they would use to conduct every day business. 1/3 they would convert into precious gems to carry with them in case they had to flee hastily. 1/3 they would put in a place they considered safe, like burying them in an ordinary field until the crisis was over. Sometimes the

owner died and the treasure was forgotten in the field or unknown to be in the field. So, this idea of finding treasure hidden in a field is not so farfetched.

The main point of this parable is that God's Word is available to all. Bibles can be found in homes, hotel rooms, libraries, parochial schools, and of course, churches. Even though there are an abundance of Bibles in our country, many of them go unopened. The treasure is "hidden" in many accessible places – even the church. And yet there are so many people that don't know what they are missing – they walk right past this treasure.

But when they find it – when the good news that Jesus paid for their sins and has reserved a place for all believers in heaven is shared with them – they do everything they can to make that treasure a part of their lives.

They can't purchase this treasure – Christ already bought it for them with his holy precious blood – but that phrase about selling everything they have and purchasing the field is another way of saying, "They give up their old way of life (everything they had) and now have a new way of life – a life in the field – a life in God's Word.

B. The second parable is like the first. A merchant finds a fine pearl and sells everything he had to purchase this pearl. Pretty much the same idea as the first only this person knows something is missing in their lives and they were searching. Maybe this person has tried some of the many different religions – those world religions that preach salvation by good works and found these religions were lacking. There was no peace in trying to work your way into heaven – only uncertainty. Then they found the gospel that proclaims you have been saved by God's grace through faith and not by what you do. God's salvation is a free gift that comes through the Holy Spirit. This gem was the treasure they had been looking for and they had to have it. As in the previous parable they gave up what they had and made this precious gem – the gospel – the center of their lives.

C. The third parable makes a different point. **“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** In this parable The Kingdom of Heaven is the visible church where the gospel is proclaimed. As illustrated in earlier parables in this chapter, the visible church will contain believers and unbelievers and there will be a sorting on the last day. Make sure you are one of the “good” fish by treasuring the gospel message.

Jesus describes the value of the Kingdom of God in these parables. Heaven is God's perfect, eternal kingdom but God's kingdom is also in this world. This world is imperfect, not eternal. Jesus is still the King of both heaven and earth. But a key point to remember is that God's kingdom is not political and social – it is spiritual. Churches often blur that line today. Too many get so involved with only political or social causes that they lose sight of what is most important.

There is nothing wrong with concern for society and its needs today, but the greater concern has to be God's spiritual kingdom. Jesus warns against those who would establish their own kingdom or a following disguised as God's kingdom. **“Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.’”** (Luke 17:20b, 21). God's kingdom is within us. God's kingdom is ours by faith.

Considering God's kingdom comes to us through our faith helps us to remember the value of God's kingdom. Without faith we are lost and condemned creatures – forever. Purely and simply put, out of divine love and mercy our heavenly Father gives us faith in his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, as a gift of the Holy Spirit. We do not deserve to have faith. We simply cannot earn God's forgiveness. Nor can any of us buy our way into heaven. On our own we are without hope and without heaven. But Praise God for giving us the gift of faith that brings us the treasures of salvation – forgiveness, peace, joy, and everlasting life in heaven. What a great treasure we have, but this treasure is not a treasure we want to hide. Rather it is a treasure we want to share.

II. Jesus asked his disciples, **“Have you understood all these things?” “Yes,” they replied.** ⁵² **He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”** The disciples thought they had a handle on what Jesus was teaching them and they did understand to a point, but the Holy Spirit would perfect their understanding on that first Pentecost.

Have you understood all these things? Well, sort of. I would imagine there are still some questions you might have but you know the basics. The Holy Spirit has worked in your hearts to point you to Jesus who redeemed you on the cross – purchasing you with his holy precious blood. The Holy Spirit has given you faith to bring you forgiveness for your sins. But your faith also brings you the same storeroom of treasures the disciples had and more. Through those Old Testament stories you have learned you can see God's grace, his patience and love for his people – for you. Through the New Testament proclamation of the Gospel contained in Paul's letters you have many useful Bible passages to help share the good news of salvation and a guide for Christian living. Now Jesus is encouraging you to open your store rooms and share this knowledge about Christ Jesus you have stored there.

After all Peter said, **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”** (2 Peter 3:15). We set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts and lives because we have been given this great treasure of salvation. When others see our joy in this life and ask us about it, we can share this treasure that God has given us – we can talk about our Savior. May God's gracious gift of faith which has brought you this greatest treasure, bring you peace and joy, and may it move you to share this joy with others. Amen.