

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS AT GLENKIRK



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NOVEMBER 12 – 16, 2018

# MONDAY

## Matthew 13:44

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*“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.”* —Matthew 13:44

In the ancient world there were no banks. Often the ground of one’s property was the safest place to hide a treasure. To the Jews of Jesus’ day, the rabbis taught that the only safe place for money was the earth. Today, where there are no banks or in times of upheaval, some people bury valuables for safekeeping (under the mattress). During the American Civil War, Southerners resorted to hiding any and all valuables and foods from the pillaging Union soldiers under General Sherman. Hidden and buried items were left behind with the hope to return later to recover it.

Apparently, the man in this parable discovered a long-buried and forgotten treasure in a field. According to Jewish law, a buried treasure belonged to the finder. The man knew in an instant that this treasure was worth all he had. His joy over the treasure was so intense that he gladly sold everything. The man bought the land to ensure his full possession of the treasure.

“The kingdom of heaven is like ...” The kingdom of heaven is wherever the will of God is done. We often use words like “rule” and “reign” in our hearts to describe the invisible kingdom’s realm. Because each of us sins, none of us can do the perfect will of God. On our own, we can’t be part of God’s

kingdom. But Jesus came to make His kingdom available to everyone (Mark 1:15). Jesus takes away the sin of everyone who trusts in Him (John 1:29). The person has a change of heart, and he or she truly wants to do God's will. By the grace of God, He sends His Holy Spirit to live inside of that person, and he or she is then able to do God's will. That person is part of God's kingdom.

Years ago, I had my then younger sons make a list of what they valued. I was heartbroken when their list did not include Jesus, the Gospel, the Bible or God. When I brought it up, they said, "Oh, Mom, this list is just stuff we have now. Jesus is forever!"

## QUESTION

What do you treasure? Make a list and then ask your children, a close family member or a friend to tell you what they think you treasure. Be sure to include: people, positions, possessions and passions.

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Jesus! Thank You that because of Jesus I can be a part of Your glorious kingdom forever! Amen.

# TUESDAY

## Matthew 13:44; 16:25-26

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*“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.”* —Matthew 13:44

There are two interpretations of this parable; they vary according to the identity of the treasure. A treasure is anything that is valued or prized by an individual. We value relationships, friendships, achievements, careers, pastors, ministries, hobbies, possessions, and more to varying degrees. In the first interpretation of this parable, **the treasure is Jesus Christ Himself and the Good News.**

*“Take a look at your own heart, and you will soon find out what has stuck to it and where your treasure is. It is easy to determine whether hearing the Word of God, living according to it, and achieving such a life gives you as much enjoyment and calls forth as much diligence from you as does accumulating and saving money and property.”* —Martin Luther

Do you believe that having Jesus Christ makes life worth living? The psalmist expressed the deep realization of believers through the ages when he prayed, *“Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”* (Psalm 73:25-26).

The Gospel is free, yet having Christ takes all a person has. Jesus said that all who treasure Him must lose their lives. *“Whoever loses his life for me will find it ... what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Matthew 16:25-26). *“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:33).

What we value most (treasure) is what we think about most, hold onto diligently, worry about, protect, spend time with, want to talk about, study further, and especially DREAD not having. Being in the kingdom of God with the rule and the reign of God in your heart means valuing Jesus Christ and the Good News more than anything else.

When Pastor Walter Ray shared the Gospel with me years ago, my life shifted radically. I already had so much: a loving husband, a career, two sons, a home, and more. But when the Gospel got a hold on my heart, it was as if a light flooded in on a tide of forgiveness, love, joy and peace. Jesus is my greatest treasure.

## QUESTION

What do you treasure most in life? If that treasure (person, position, or possession) were taken away, what would be your response? How would you describe your response to Jesus Christ and the Good News?

## PRAYER

Gracious God, help me to treasure Your Son, Jesus Christ, above all else. May my life bear the marks of a true disciple. Amen.

# WEDNESDAY

## Matthew 13:44

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In the parable of the hidden treasure, there are two possible interpretations based on the identity of the treasure. Yesterday we looked at the treasure being Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The second interpretation is that the treasure is God's people. In this interpretation, you, as a believer, are God's treasured possession. You are loved! You are chosen and valued.

The "man" throughout these parables is Christ. The field is the world. In the Old Testament, God described Israel as His treasured possession: "*For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you (Israel) out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession*" (Deuteronomy 7:6) and "*For the LORD has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his treasured possession*" (Psalm 135:4).

In the New Testament, Paul prayed for all believers to understand more fully the hope to which we (believers) are called: "*I pray that the eyes of your heart will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance*" (Ephesians 1:18 NLT).

In this parable, Jesus, the "man," in his joy went and sold everything he had and bought it. Jesus laid down His life to redeem this treasure, hidden within the world (John 10:15). When Jesus Christ returns, this treasure will be fully displayed as His true followers.

What response shall we make as God's treasured possession? Paul writes to Titus: *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good"* (Titus 2:11-14 NLT).

## QUESTION

What have you discovered about the kingdom of God and yourself as you study the parables Jesus told? How will you thank God today that His people are His treasure?

## PRAYER

Ask God to flood your heart with light so that you can understand the hope He has given to those He called His treasured possession, His glorious inheritance. Ask for help to encourage other believers to live as children beloved of God. Amen.

# THURSDAY

## Matthew 13:45-46

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*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.” —Matthew 13:45-46*

In this parable, the merchant seeks pearls until he finds one of such value that he staked all he had on one business venture and bought it. There are two main lines of interpretation: one is that the pearl is Jesus Christ, and the second is that the pearl is the Church.

In the first interpretation, the man is someone who seeks something to satisfy his soul fully, completely, forever. Finally, after trying many things, he finds Christ. The man sells all that he has because Christ is worth all anyone has. This man, like Paul, counted *“everything a loss 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”* (Philippians 3:8).

No doubt the pearl merchant was used to bargaining to pay the lowest price for his pearls. After all, it was his job. But this time was different. He knew it was worth far more than everything else he owned. He didn't have to think twice about the exchange. The pearl was what he had been diligently searching for daily.



In the second interpretation, the man is Jesus Christ. The pearl is the Church, described as bought with a price greater than silver or gold—the very life of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18-19). The Church is the Bride of Christ, whom He loved so much that He gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). No greater price could be offered!

Both interpretations follow Scripture. The Bible speaks of God as the believer's treasure and of the believer as God's treasure. Certainly, to know the LORD Jesus Christ is worth everything. But who can claim to understand the depth of God the Father's love for His people? Jesus loved His own so deeply that He sacrificed all that He had for us. Does this truth bring you comfort? Can you say with assurance, "I am chosen by the LORD to be His treasure, His own inheritance, and He is my treasure"?

## QUESTION

What would it mean for you to value knowing Christ so much that all other things (persons, power, possessions, and so forth) become secondary in your heart and in your priorities? What lesser treasures would keep you from full devotion to your true treasure, Jesus Christ?

## PRAYER

Thank You, Gracious God, that I am chosen by Jesus as His treasure! Help me to be a full participant in His glorious church. Amen.

# FRIDAY

## Matthew 13:44-46; Mark 10:17-31

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Jesus looked at him and loved him. *“One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”* —Mark 10:21

The parables of the hidden treasure (v. 44) and pearl of great price (vv. 45-46) tell us that the kingdom of God is a place where God is valued above all else and that God values you with the greatest love. The disciples experience the practical application of this parable in the story of the rich young ruler told in three synoptic gospels (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-25).

When we read about this rich young ruler, we often picture him as self-righteous and greedy; but with a closer look, that is not the case. His pursuit of God was sincere. He ran to Jesus and fell on his knees in front of Him and others (humility and urgency), and his questions reflected honest inquiry.

Mark records that Jesus' directive to the young ruler to sell all his possessions and give to the poor was motivated by love, not disgust. Jesus wants us to love and treasure Him wholeheartedly, but we can't love Him that way if our hearts are full of anything or anyone else. Idolatry isn't only about golden calves (Exodus 32:31). We can make anything an idol if it takes first place in our hearts: a spouse or children, work, hobbies, wealth, fame, beauty, youth, or possessions. Jesus pinpointed the ONE thing that kept this man from experiencing the richness of a relationship (hidden treasure or pearl) with God: money. What is your ONE thing?

The remedy for idolatry isn't a halfway measure. Idols must be ripped from our hearts and replaced with God Himself. Since money was this man's idol, Jesus got to the heart of the matter: "Sell your stuff and give all the money to the poor." Jesus did not tell anyone else to do this; but when He points out an idol in anyone's life, He requires radical removal. Nothing less will do.

When we loosen our grip on our idols, we can take up the cross of obedience and faithfulness to Christ and follow Him wherever He leads. This is the "abundant life" in all its richness that only Jesus can give; idols steal our hearts and leave them empty and wanting (John 10:10). What is God calling you to put a "For Sale" sign on today?

## QUESTION

What is your greatest treasure? How would you have felt if you had been the man that day?

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father, show me what I need to put out of my heart today and replace with the treasure of Your Son. Grant me the desire to be sold out for You alone every day. Amen.



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