

Baptism and Membership Service of Natalie Hart

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Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Good evening. It's our joy tonight to baptize our sister Natalie Reynolds and to receive her into the membership of the church. We're going to be doing things a little differently tonight. We'll be having the preaching of the word first here and then hearing Natalie's testimony and affirmations and then we'll move together over to the fellowship hall where the baptismal is for the baptism.

Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Please turn with me in your Bibles tonight to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 13. Matthew 13.

We gather tonight for a joyous purpose. And what we're doing here tonight, adding to the church by way of baptism, is part of the fulfillment of the Great Commission that Jesus gave to his church. He told us to go and make disciples of all the nations and to baptize them and to teach them. Well, here tonight we have a disciple from one of the nations and we're going to baptize her and make it our aim to continue to teach her until she can no longer be a part of us or until Christ comes again. And Natalie is evidence that the plan for God's extension of his kingdom throughout the earth is being fulfilled. The Great Commission is taking place and it's a marvelous thing.

[1:31] He's growing his church for his glory and we're privileged to have a part in it. It's a blessed thing, but maybe it would be too easy for us to miss the blessing. To say, oh, it's no big deal.

It's just some rite. It's just some ceremony. We're just going to put somebody under the water and bring them up and it doesn't really do anything. And so we're not going to see the significance of it. May that not be the case. To think that tonight is not a big deal is to miss the centrality of baptism and being added to the church, to the plan of God for his kingdom, for his church.

And so we want to correct any misapprehension we might have about the significance of a soul being added to the kingdom by looking at Jesus' words in Matthew 13, beginning in verse 44 and reading through verse 46.

Two very short parables here that we want to consider tonight. Matthew 13, verses 44 to 46. This is God's word. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field.

[2:37] When a man found it, he hid it again. And then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. 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. You see, the kingdom of heaven is so important. It's of such great value that it's worth giving up everything we have in order to get it.

In order to gain entrance to that kingdom. It's that significant. It's that valuable. It's that important. We want to see tonight that there's something of great value.

And that we must do whatever it takes to get it. And the something of great value is the kingdom of heaven. Again, here it's compared to a treasure or an extraordinary pearl.

A priceless pearl. A costly, expensive pearl. And when we think of valuable things, we think of things like treasure and gold and diamonds and pearls. But to focus on these as of the greatest value is to miss the point.

[3:46] These are just the points of comparison. The thing that's really valuable is far more valuable than anything we can imagine on this earth. As valuable as gold and silver and diamonds and pearls are, their value is limited because they are fleeting.

They're temporary. They're going to rust and corrupt. And you can't take them with you. The things we think of as valuable pair in comparison to what Jesus says is of the greatest worth.

Which is the kingdom of heaven. And so any earthly thing you can think of is not the most valuable thing. For some people it's money. Many people make it their life goal to make money and lots of it. So they can have all the things that money buys. The security that comes with money. Maybe that's what some young people hear. Life goal. I want to get a good job so I can have lots of money.

But money is not the most valuable thing. For others maybe it's not something monetary. Maybe it's pleasure. Even legitimate pleasures that the world has to offer us.

[4:52] The pleasure of winning. The pleasure of friendship. The pleasure of physical activity. It just feels good to be active. The pleasure of good food we've all just enjoyed over the past weekend.

The pleasure of any pleasing thing. Sexual pleasure. Some mistakenly think these are of the greatest value. And so they focus all of their time and attention and energy on gaining these things. But to do that is to miss the most valuable thing. The best thing. Some think it's power. They'll do anything to obtain it. To have that sort of influence over their friends or over their employees. Some things that people think are most valuable are good. Like family. And it's good and right to enjoy. Our families. And many of us had a chance to do that.

With our extended families over the Thanksgiving holiday. But that's not the best thing. It's not the most valuable. The most important thing. No. The thing of greatest worth is the kingdom of heaven.

[5:56] Better than anything. We can imagine in this earth. John Calvin puts it this way. These parables are intended to instruct believers to prefer the kingdom of heaven to the whole world.

And therefore to deny themselves and all the desires of the flesh. That nothing may prevent them from obtaining so valuable a possession. And then he says.

We are greatly in need of such a warning. For we are so captivated by the allurements of the world. That eternal life fades from our view. Now that was true in Calvin's day.

How much more true in our day. How much more do we need a warning against the allurements of the world. All of the things the world has to offer us. And it has a lot to offer. And much of it is very attractive and very appealing.

But when we get so caught up in that. That the kingdom of heaven. This business of God's people. His church. And Jesus. All of that. That's not so important to you anymore.

[6:51] Then your perspective has been skewed. It's not right anymore. Because the kingdom of heaven is the most important thing. And so if to you tonight. There's something more important than being in God's kingdom.

Being one of his children. Then the world's got its hooks in you. There's something more important to you. And the kingdom of heaven is fading in importance. And so Jesus has something to say to us tonight.

There's something better. The things you want are going to rust. And that rust is going to eat away at your possessions. And it's going to eat away at you. But there's something better.

Many here tonight. Praise the Lord. Have found something far better. They found entrance to the kingdom of heaven. They're God's children. And that is the greatest thing. The most valuable thing that you could have.

That is what Natalie possesses. And why it's such a joy to gather tonight for a baptism. Those that have found entrance to the kingdom. Of heaven. Heaven. Have found a kind.

[7:53] Benevolent ruler. In that kingdom. He has rules. But he himself has provided a way of forgiveness. When we break those rules. He is good.

And all he does is good. If you need to be convinced. Listen to the messages from the last three Sunday mornings. He is wise. He is wise. He works everything together for good.

For the subjects in his kingdom. He is sovereign. Just. And loving. He is a father. He is not just a ruler on a throne. He is a father. To the people in his kingdom.

That loves them. That protects them. That provides for them. That guarantees them an inheritance. In glory. Glory. He has made the ultimate sacrifice.

In giving his own son. That all who believe in him. Might be forgiven. And find entrance into his kingdom. His son Jesus. Is himself. A priceless treasure. That's what people have found.

[8:51] Who have gained entrance to the kingdom of heaven. And they found. That the subjects of that kingdom. Though not perfect. Are on their way to glory. And they are loving people.

They are joyful. They are peaceful. They are patient. They are kind. They are good. They are faithful. They are gentle. They are self-controlled. They think of others. Before themselves. Remarkable thing in this world.

Where everybody thinks about me first. The subjects of this kingdom. Think of others first. They live lives that look very different. From the rest of the world. They are not a people.

Who are cynical and jaded. Like so many others. The kingdom is a place. Where people rejoice. With those who rejoice. Instead of being jealous of them. A place where people mourn. With those who mourn. Instead of ignoring them. And abandoning them. In their time of need. Those who have found their way. Into the kingdom. Have found people. Who build each other up in love. Rather than tear each other down.

[9:46] And these subjects. Are looking forward. To a life to come. That's far better. Better than even the blessed life. That they enjoy right now. Right here. They're looking forward.

To a time and place. When there'll be no more. Suffering. No more mourning. No more pain. Or sickness. Or sadness. Or weakness. And it's guaranteed. That these subjects. Will make it to this better life. Not one will be lost. Along the way. This is what those who find. Their way into the kingdom. Find glorious things. The best of things. He added up. And many other things. That we could say tonight. About it. And it's the best of kingdoms. It's the most priceless. Of treasures. Those who have found it. Have found the treasure. And the great pearl.

But treasure and pearls. Can't compare. And so now. Subjects. Don't lay up treasure. On earth anymore. Those things. Are not important. They lay up. Treasure in heaven. Where moth and rust. [10:40] Can't destroy. And where thieves. Can't break in and steal. Because they see the glory of Christ. The glory of his kingdom. The glory of being a part of his people. And everything that the world has.

Can't hold a candle to it. Many here. Have found this thing of great value. And if you're one of them. Praise the Lord. Natalie has found it.

Praise the Lord. Lord. And. Though Natalie joined that kingdom. When she first believed. Tonight she joins herself. To a visible representation. Of God's church.

Here on the earth. Her baptism tonight. Will mark her out. As a disciple. A follower of Christ. As one. Whose sins have been forgiven. As one who is joined. To Christ.

Just as each of you here. Who have been baptized. Your baptism. Your baptism. Meant the same thing to you. That it will mean to Natalie tonight. So as you watch Natalie be baptized tonight.

[11:36] You be reminded. That you too are a disciple. You too are in union with Christ. Your sins too have been washed away. You enjoy the great benefits.

Of the kingdom of heaven. And if you haven't joined that kingdom tonight. If you haven't been baptized. May God fill you with a holy jealousy. A holy desire.

That these things might be yours as well. This blessed kingdom. Some might say there is no such kingdom. Either it's too good to be true.

Or you don't want to be subject to a king. You don't like rules. Or authority. Well it's true that you won't find a king. Or a kingdom on earth like that. But this kingdom isn't of this world.

It's a heavenly kingdom. That has begun. But it hasn't yet been brought in its fullness. It will be when Jesus comes again. And you can find your way into it.

[12:28] Sad to say some of you know about the kingdom. We could even say that you found it. You've heard about it time and again. But you still haven't come into the kingdom.

You still haven't bowed your knee before the great king. Submitted yourself to him. Sought forgiveness through his glorious son. The world and its treasures still hold too much pleasure for you.

Too much attraction. I like my sin. I like my whatever it is that you're clinging to too much to let it go. And so you haven't come and bowed your knee.

It's your loss tonight. Because the finding of this kingdom. The entering of it brings great joy. The man who found the treasure in the field was so joyful.

Was so glad that he immediately went and sold everything he had. So that he might gain the treasure. Ask anyone here who's found the treasure. And they'll tell you of their joy.

[13:25] Their gladness. And the great things God has done for them. Ask Natalie. You know what she'll tell you in her own words in a few moments. About how she was bitter. How that bitterness was taken away.

Only finding the kingdom of heaven. Becoming part of it. Can replace that sort of heart. With a heart filled with joy. Natalie tonight. You should be filled with joy.

And I'm sure you are. That you found the pearl of greatest price. And we all who have come before you into the kingdom. Should have our joy renewed afresh tonight. What a glorious thing.

That God has shown us the way into his kingdom. What a blessed thing that our sins are forgiven. What a blessed thing that we have a guarantee of eternal life.

Life with our Father in heaven. Seeing the face of Christ. That is ours tonight. And it's cause for great joy. Anyway. And so. In the first place then.

[14 : 19] There is something of great value. It's the kingdom of heaven. And gaining entrance to it. It's worth more than anything you can imagine. But secondly. You must do whatever it takes.

To get it. To get this thing of great value. These men in the parables. Went and sold everything they had. To get the treasure. To get that pearl. Of greatest price. Whatever it took.

To get it. They were willing to do it. And they gave up everything they had. To get the one thing of great value. And you must be ready to do the same. And maybe that's the hang up for you.

You don't want to give up the cheap trinkets. The little treasures that you're clinging to. Little things that you hold so dear. But the very things you think of as valuable. You must be ready to give up.

To gain the thing of greatest value. Listen to Paul's own testimony of this in his own life. Philippians 3.8 What is more? I consider everything a loss. Compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

[15 : 20] For whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish. That I may gain Christ. And be found in Him. Paul's willing to give it all up. To consider it rubbish even.

That he might gain Christ. And to have Him. Are you willing to give it all up? That you might have Christ. That you might have this thing of greatest worth. Are you willing to give up those sinful desires.

For pleasure, power, money. You'll hear in Natalie's testimony. That upon finding this pearl of greatest price. She was willing to give up her pursuit of popularity. Her pride.

And has found that Jesus is far better than these things. Are you willing to give up those things? Or your things that are so attractive to you. You might even have to give up some legitimate pleasures. Of course we have to give up those sinful things. But there may be legitimate things. Nothing wrong in and of themselves. God may call you to give up. Some people may have to give up family and friends.

[16 : 18] Because their family and friends don't love the Savior. And they may reject you. If you follow after Christ. I want nothing to do with you. We're not going to talk to you anymore. We want no part of you. Some people will have to give that up.

Now it won't be true for everyone. Others will have to give up other things. But are you ready to go and sell everything that you've got. To get rid of whatever it is that's of value to you now. So that you might have the one thing of greatest value.

If you haven't come and followed after Jesus. Then you're not part of His kingdom. But you can come right now. You can give up your love of sin and self. And repent and come to Jesus.

And you must do this. Just given a tiny glimpse of the thing of greatest value tonight. Will you be willing to give up your valuable things for that one thing?

Whatever it is that you have to give up. Whatever it is that you're thinking. No I just can't let go of this sin. Of this pleasure. Of this thing. This I'm not willing to give up.

[17 : 24] And leave behind. Whatever it is. Know that Christ is able to fill that place in your life. With something far better. This is the great thing. The others pale in comparison.

Will you do what it takes. To come and receive it. Now don't mistake this for works. You can't buy your way into heaven. You can't earn your salvation. The words of Isaiah 55 ring true. Come all you who are thirsty.

Come to the waters. And you who have no money. Come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money. And without cost. But make no mistake. You must come.

You must repent of your sins. And put your trust in Christ. Have you sold everything. So that you can come without money. And buy. Have you put all your hope and trust in him.

Or are you still clinging to your sin. Do you think the cost is too high. Rich young ruler thought the cost was too high. Some of the saddest words in the gospel.

[18 : 20] And he went away sad. Because he clung to the treasures of the world. Instead of clinging to the treasure of great price. The kingdom of heaven.

Don't you make that mistake tonight. Don't you go away sad. Here's a glorious thing. The kingdom of heaven. Natalie has found her way into it. I'm going to be baptized tonight.

Don't you go away sad tonight. Thinking. It could be me. But now I'm going to cling to my little trinkets. My little treasures. There's something far better.
And so don't go. Don't go from here. Not right with God. Don't go from here tonight. Here the kingdom of God has been laid out before you. Ever so briefly. And in the feeblest of words. But here it is.
There's great glory to be had. Great benefit. If you would come and trust in Christ. You can have this great. This priceless treasure. You come to Jesus. And you will have it.
[19:16] Thank you.