

Your Ultimate Treasure

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[0:00] And turn to Matthew chapter 13. Matthew chapter 13 and verse 44.

! Matthew chapter 13 and verse 44.! Matthew chapter 13 and verse 44.! Matthew chapter 14 and we'll just read through verse 46.

This is our Lord speaking about the kingdom of heaven. 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.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. And when he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

[1:06] Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Almost every Christmas, the movie Jingle All the Way is played on TV networks.

It's the story of a man, Howard, who must enter the holiday rush on Christmas Eve to buy a highly coveted action figure, Turbo Man, for his son. But because seemingly everyone in America wants this toy, Howard faces incredible opposition throughout the movie.

Yet he will stop at nothing to get Turbo Man for his son. There's one scene in particular that really captures Howard's unrelenting ambition to get this action figure.

One store in the mall has a select number of Turbo Man action figures left. And because there's a huge crowd gathering, the store has come up with this attempt to avoid chaos by passing out numbered balls to the crowd.

Then, like a lottery, if your number is called, you get to buy this action figure. Now, as the crowd surges toward the employees who are holding these buckets of balls, the employees become overwhelmed and decide to just throw all the balls up into the air.

[2:22] And as you can imagine, just madness ensues. I mean, bodies go flying. These shoppers are diving onto one another, trying to wrest the ball away from each other. They're choking each other and they're biting one another.

It's just chaos. And Howard wastes no time getting into the action. You see, in spite of being tackled, bitten, and pepper sprayed, he relentlessly pursues this ball as it bounces all over the mall. I mean, down an escalator, over a ledge, into the lap of a small child, who then carries it into a playground. And Howard follows this child all the way through the playground. Because Howard refuses to give up.

You see, in that moment, that ball is more valuable to him than anything else. So what about you?

It's probably safe to say that you're not consumed with the desire to have a turbo man.

But all of us are seeking something. All of us are pursuing something. The question just is, what? What do you value most?

[3:27] Maybe it's your family. Maybe it's your job. Maybe it's your car. Maybe it's just your image. I don't know what it is for you. Only you know. But we all value something most.

We all have something. A person. An object. A position. An ideal. That consumes our thoughts.

That drives our ambitions. That governs the way we live our lives.

What is it for you? What is most valuable to you? Well, to answer that question, look with me again at Matthew 13. I know we've read it, but it's a rather short passage, so we're going to read it again together.

Matthew 13, beginning in verse 44. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. What we just read are two parables.

[4 : 35] Parables are short stories that make comparisons. One commentator I read put it this way. Parables are imaginary gardens with real toads living in them.

Parables are imaginary gardens with real toads living in them. And that's what Jesus sets before us in this passage. He creates this imaginary garden so that we could catch a glimpse of some real toads.

When Jesus painted these pictures, when he told these parables, he was conveying truth about one topic in particular, most often throughout the Gospels.

And that topic is the kingdom of heaven. Or as other Gospel writers would say, the kingdom of God. Jesus came telling stories to communicate truth about this kingdom, about God's kingdom that he was bringing into the midst of a broken world.

So what did he say about the kingdom of heaven? Or maybe more generally, what does he say about what's most valuable to you or what ought to be most valuable to you?

[5 : 43] Now, though we'll see as we go that he's specifically talking about the kingdom of heaven, I think Jesus makes here two observations that hold true for whatever we value most, whether it's the right thing or all the other wrong things.

So let's look more closely at these two parables to see these two observations. Now first, Jesus talks about this hidden treasure that a man finds. Then he talks about this pearl of great value that another man finds.

And it's pretty apparent, if we use our senses, we can tell these are parallel parables. They're both conveying the same idea in only slightly different ways. So what is Jesus trying to teach?

Well, look at both men in both parables. In the first parable, the parable of the hidden treasure, the man stumbles upon this treasure. He wasn't looking for it or expecting to find it.

He's walking through a field and bam, there it is, this treasure. Now in the second parable, it's a little bit different. The parable of the pearl of great value, the merchant in that parable is actually looking for fine pearls.

[6 : 49] He's looking for these, but he comes across one of great value, seemingly more valuable than he expected to find. He's looking for many pearls, many pearls of fine value, but he finds one of great value.

And he'd give up everything just to have that one. It's like he was looking for pearls the size of dimes, and he found a pearl the size of a golf ball. Two men in two different situations make similar discoveries.

They stumble across something of great value that they never expected to. So what do you think their initial attitude was upon making their discovery? Meh, indifferent.

That's all right, but I'm going to keep looking. No, of course not. They were obviously overjoyed.

They were obviously ecstatic, because what is true of each of these men in these two parables is also true of every one of us.

What is most valuable to you is that which you cheerfully discover. So that's the first answer Jesus gives to the question, what's most valuable to you? That's the first observation.

[7 : 53] What is most valuable to you is that which you cheerfully discover. Now at this point, like I said before, we're not necessarily even talking about whether or not the kingdom of heaven is most valuable to you.

I would argue that it is universally true, without exception, that all people everywhere cheerfully discover what they value most, whether it be the right thing or the many wrong things.

When I was a kid, I loved collecting Pokemon cards. Just like collecting baseball cards, some Pokemon cards were more valuable than other ones. And there were certain ones, the ones that were of most value were called holographic cards, because when you held them up in the light, they kind of shimmered.

And that was like fancy for a kid. Now my grandparents, they used to take me to this baseball card store, more often than I'll say, and spoil me with a pack, or two or three, of Pokemon cards.

And I'd tear open that package and I'd start flipping through the cards real fast. I mean, I didn't take my time. I had to get to these holographic cards. I had to find them. Now, most of the cards were duds, worthless in my eyes, or even duplicates of cards that I had.

[8 : 57] But I was looking for the best of the best, a holographic card. And when I came across one, it was nothing short of a cheerful discovery. Now maybe Pokemon cards aren't your thing and never have been your thing.

But whatever it is that you most value, I'm sure that when you obtain it, you're overwhelmed with joy. Maybe it's a certain kind of car. Maybe it's a promotion at work. Maybe it's a video game. Whatever it might be, like the two men in these parables, it's cheerfully discovered. It's cheerfully obtained. Jesus not only teaches us the attitude of our discovery, but he also teaches the response to our discovery.

What are we going to do when we find what we value most? Look with me again at these two parables. Look at the way the two men respond to finding the treasure and the pearl.

Jesus says that the man who found the treasure in his joy, that being the joy of his discovery, he goes and he sells all that he has, and he buys the field. And the man who found the pearl, he goes and he sells all that he has, and he bought the pearl.

[10:06] They sold it all. They didn't hold anything back. Because the treasure and the pearl were worth it. Their homes sold. Their possessions, sold.

Their livestock, sold. Everything they had to their name, sold. Because that treasure and that pearl would buy more than they ever had before.

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you would do anything to have it? Your money? Your job? Your possessions? Even your dignity?

I've always been fascinated by people at airports when they're waiting to greet arriving guests.

There's really a wide spectrum of reactions. There's those people who are there purely on business. And they're just there chauffeurs for companies. Right? They're dressed in suits and they're holding up these signs with names on them. Names of individuals they don't even know. And then there's the people who are there to greet loved ones.

[11:08] Maybe loved ones they haven't seen in months or even years. What a contrast between the chauffeurs and the family members. One couldn't care less about the person he's greeting.

He's just there for his paycheck. And the other couldn't hardly contain their excitement. One whose affection is written in just plain black ink.

The other whose affection is written all over their face. One barely cracks a smile when they greet the passenger. The other literally runs across the room to say hello.

Oh, that's reckless abandon. That's selling everything, figuratively speaking, to obtain what is most valuable to them. They sprint. They shout. They drop all their holding.

Because nothing compares to getting to their loved one. Their pride, their dignity, sold. They sacrificed all social norms for the sake of greeting their loved one.

[12:06] And that's what Jesus teaches us here in this parable. That's the second observation that we can make from Jesus. What is most valuable to you is that for which you surrender everything.

What is most valuable to you is that for which you surrender everything. So we've now noted two observations that Jesus has made.

We've been talking in generalities so far. We've been working under the assumption that all of us value something above all else. And whatever it is that we value, it's cheerfully discovered and it's recklessly obtained.

What is it for you? Is it a bonus at work? Is it a much needed vacation? Maybe it's the possibility of going from renting an apartment to buying a home.

Maybe it's the latest piece of technology like the iPhone 6 plus or an ultra HD TV which I just recently discovered. Because seeing every blade of grass on the masters just wasn't good enough.

[13:06] So what is it that you most value? We've made two broad observations from the parables that Jesus told. That hold true for pretty much any person, any object or idea that we value most.

And if the Bible was meant to just be a feel-good message, then this sermon so far would be a top-notch explanation of the text. There's plenty of preachers today who would conclude their sermon right here, and they would send everyone home exhorting them to cheerfully discover and recklessly abandon whatever they value most because Jesus sounds like he says so.

But that would be a gross twisting of the words of Jesus. That would be a sermon tailor-made for itching ears who only want to suit their own passions. You see, if we make Jesus' words subjective and open to anything that we want, then I don't think there's a person on this planet who would be offended by these parables.

Go after what you value most. Pursue it. Obtain it. Enjoy it. Cherish it. But Jesus isn't just making general observations. He's not just saying, whatever you value most, go for it.

He's making very specific observations about what ought to be most valuable to us. And they're not empty observations.

[14 : 24] They're not petty observations. They are observations that make demands on our lives. These parables are meant to elicit a response from us.

We're supposed to read them and ask ourselves, Do I value most what Jesus says I should value most? These parables aren't supposed to point us to our own opinions and tastes for what is most valuable to us.

These parables are meant to point us to what matters most to Jesus. It's not about our preferences, but it's about his demands. This isn't, well, you can like your strawberry ice cream and Jesus likes his chocolate.

Jesus isn't saying what's most valuable to you is fine. I thought maybe I'd just share with you what's most valuable to me. He's making it pretty clear that what ought to be most valuable to you isn't a loved one.

It's not a position in society, and it's not your own happiness or self-worth. It's the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is presenting. He's offering the kingdom of heaven to us because he's kind, and he's gracious, and he's compassionate, and he's inviting us to enter in, to obtain this entity of greatest value.

[15 : 38] But if we don't take it, it's not like we can go and have our strawberry ice cream. You see, there are consequences for those of us who spurn his demands. Jesus told other parables than the ones that we've just read, and not all of his parables depict such happy people, such blessed people.

In fact, the parables just before and just after the ones that we've read today have a very different tone. You see, they speak of people not finding hidden treasure or pearls of great value, but of people being thrown into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Why? Because they weren't citizens of the kingdom that Jesus offered. There were people who had rejected his offer and said, I'm fine, thanks. I'm going to keep continuing my life as I please.

You know, I prefer my own little kingdom because in my kingdom, I get to be king. In my kingdom, I don't have to submit to another king. But Jesus isn't making some relativistic remarks here.

Jesus isn't saying, whatever is most valuable to you is most valuable in your world, and whatever is most valuable to me is most valuable in my world. No, he's making a far weightier statement.

[16 : 53] He's saying, whatever is most valuable to me ought to be most valuable to you, because only my world matters. And what is most valuable to me is the kingdom of heaven.

But why? Why is the kingdom of heaven most valuable? And what's interesting to find is Jesus doesn't really give us the answer to that in this passage.

He doesn't exactly tell us why the kingdom of heaven ought to be most valuable to us. He does tell us in so many words that we ought to cheerfully discover it, and that we ought to sacrifice everything to obtain it.

But he doesn't tell us why it ought to be most valuable. So why should it be? Why should you value the kingdom of heaven above your family, above your possessions, above your job, above your position in society, above your own well-being, above anything else?

For this reason. The kingdom of heaven ought to be most valuable to you and to me, because of its king.

[17 : 55] The kingdom of heaven ought to be most valuable to you and to me, because of its king. And so when Jesus tells us these parables, he's saying, I invite you to the kingdom of heaven, the most valuable possession, because it's got me.

I'm its king. And you'll want to know me as your king. Jesus is the one whom we ultimately cheerfully discover. Jesus is the one for whom we should sacrifice everything.

It's Jesus. Because in him, we find, even as Pastor Jason said earlier, the remedy to our greatest problem and the reason for our greatest joy.

In Jesus, we find the remedy to our greatest problem of sin and the reason for our greatest joy, being reconciled to our creator God in right relationship.

You see, in defeating sin and death, Jesus not only saves us from condemnation, but he grants us eternal life with him as our benevolent king.

[18 : 55] Jesus makes us citizens of his kingdom, but not just citizens of his kingdom. He makes us children of God and co-heirs with him of this kingdom.

And that's why he can tell us that we will one day sit at table with him and eat and drink in his kingdom. All of the riches of heaven, bountifully given to us.

God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, says Paul.

Paul is then the king of this kingdom most valuable to you because he should be. So if you're on the outside of the kingdom tonight, the king welcomes you in.

He invites you in. Repent and believe and enter into the courts of the king with gladness in your heart. Turn from your love of sin, from your old way of living in which you hopelessly valued anything and everything but Jesus.

[19 : 57] and believe in Jesus as the only one who can satisfy. Repent and believe. And like the man who found the hidden treasure and the merchant who found the costly pearl, you too will find in the kingdom of heaven the king who's more valuable than anything and anyone else.

And if you're already in the kingdom tonight, perhaps you've wandered in your affections. Maybe you've removed the king from his rightful place in your heart. Then confess and be restored.

The king is infinitely patient and he will never cast one of his citizens from his kingdom. Remember the goodness of the king. Remember the beauty of the king. For in his kingdom, we find the remedy to our greatest problem and the reason for our greatest joy.

In his kingdom, there's no condemnation for sin, only life in abundance with the king himself. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you have been abundantly good to us in sending your son to this earth to not only tell us of the kingdom, but to die in our place in order that we might be citizens of the kingdom.

Thank you that he didn't leave us to our own devices or leave us to strive to enter on our own because we know that none of us could. We know that all of us would be outside of the kingdom where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[21 : 21] So thank you, Lord, that you have done something for our sin and you have done something in order that we might gain eternal life by sending Jesus to the cross and by raising him from the grave.

And so I pray tonight that, Lord, we would be reminded of that in your word, that we would have seen that and that we would have come to love and cherish Jesus as our great king all the more and seen that he is far greater than any ruler in this world, that he loves us and would do anything in order to bring us into his kingdom.

Please bless us as we go from here tonight. In Christ's name, amen. Amen. Amen.