

Stories That Change The World

Part #3 – “On Treasuring” Text: Matthew 13:44-46

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on May 24, 2017, by Pastor Steve Edelman

Introduction:

How did you miss it? These are the words that summarize the popular new TV series, “13 Reasons Why.” It ends with Hannah Baker committing suicide to end her pain. Hannah seeks a satisfying treasured relationship and looks in all the wrong places. She becomes degraded because of poor relationship choices which are connected to decisions that lead her to despair. In this show, Hannah furthers the illusion that suicide is fixing something that can’t be fixed. The star records her story on cassette tapes. Each character listens to these tapes so they can discover the dark truth of what ‘really’ happened. The question of who is responsible for this agony keeps you watching. Slowly, the tapes are passed around and the reality is revealed through each episode of why she ended her life. Her heart went from longing for a treasured relationship to a calculated revenge scheme. The telling of her story is dark. It’s painful. It’s a progression of events marked by evil.

I am not recommending this TV series to anyone because of the content. As a side note, parents pay attention to what your kids are watching because it’s influencing their thinking. This show was highly viewed by our teens last month and was very effective in communicating suicide as a glamorous and clever solution. So much so, that the mental health alerted parents through the school district to tell parents to not let their teenagers watch it. Jim Cambridge, the Superintendent of Schools writes, “Counsellors are noting that teenagers are talking about this program and they have also been seeing an increase in maladaptive ways of coping with pain as a result of watching various episodes. It’s powerful storytelling may lead impressionable viewers to romanticize the choices made by the characters and/or develop revenge fantasies.” As the story progresses, it leaves Hannah’s parents devastated and broken. As the kingdom of darkness progresses it finishes her. It’s subtle. It happens in plain sight. Her parents missed the warning signs of what was really going on deep in the heart of Hannah. They were distracted with other things.

In a way, we are all like Hannah and sometimes seek the wrong things which steer us into gradual darkness. We too, are also like Hannah's parents who missed the inner problem of our loved one - because we don't dig deeper to find the truth of what was really going on!

We are in the middle of a series called "stories that change the world." Jesus' parables are stories designed to transform us from the inside out. Today, we are going to be looking at a parable about a treasure the world needs. That treasure relates to God's kingdom.

Let's read Matthew 13:44 together, ⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a 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."

The first thing we want to look at is the value of the kingdom of heaven.

1. We need to understand the value of the kingdom of God.

To help us understand the value of the kingdom of God we need to know what is meant by the kingdom of God.

- The kingdom of God is referring to the reign of Christ and not just a place.
- There is a redeeming and transforming quality to this reign.
- The kingdom is being revealed in a power that overcomes evil, demons, unbelief and sin and replaces it with salvation, righteousness, peace, and joy.
- God's kingdom is present in part and will not be completed until the second coming of Christ.
- The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of Christ are the same thing in scripture.

In verse 44, God's kingdom is compared to a hidden treasure in this passage. In those days, a treasure was often hidden in the ground on their property because banks did not exist. Hard earned money or treasures would be hidden so they wouldn't be stolen. The Greek word for hidden in this passage means being out of sight or concealed.

My grandpa owned a farm and my mom told us that he buried his money all around the property. I remember as a kid, I would spend hours searching and digging in pursuit of his hidden treasure. I had dreams of finding enough treasure that would fill a

room full of gold - that I could swim in. The extent of my findings was minimal - a 1950's penny and some old bottles.

For most of us, the extent of looking for treasure is pulling off the couch cushions and looking underneath. I once made it a game to try and keep my girls occupied. All right kids, pull off the cushions because you may find a unique treasure. Hey look, a gummy bear, popcorn, chocolate, (you could put together a decent snack) that missing toy, quarters, and if you are really blessed, a toonie! I know I feel so good when I find a toonie! We can easily cheapen the value of what Jesus is talking about, to lesser mundane lost items under the cushions.

The treasure in this passage is so much more than valuable lost items. Jesus is conveying a picture of someone who had suddenly become rich by finding some hidden mass of wealth that had been concealed in a time of war or trouble. In history and even today, there are people who give their life to find hidden wealth across the globe. When found, they anticipate that the riches will change and enhance their life.

Look with me at verses 45 and 46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value." Again, the treasure is described as valuable like a rare fine pearl. In other words, the kingdom of God is better than your most prized possession or find.

What is interesting, in the parable of the pearl the man is **searching for wealth**. In the first parable of the hidden treasure the man **stumbles across it**. This man was not looking for joy, holiness or truth, and seems to have unintentionally found it. How then does one find the treasure? How do we encounter the kingdom of heaven? I love that there is a bit of mystery here. Praying a prayer can't guarantee it. There is no perfect formula because it's God's work. However, notice the commonality in both parables - once they found the treasure they responded to the treasure.

God uses multiple means to get our attention. It could have been through a tragedy, an accidental meeting, a testimony, a preacher preaching, a song playing, a life example lived in holiness, and God used it to bring about His kingdom. **This treasured gospel somehow interrupts our life and becomes understood**. We can know that we found it when it brings about peace and joy that is above all worldly treasures. But both passages describe the kingdom of God as immensely more valuable than anything

else. Far more worth than any amount of money that one could acquire. The how is less important. What we do see is that they both responded to the treasure.

Once found, it changes the course of your life. Once experienced, you recognize that it's so valuable that you are **ready to give up the lower wealth in order to obtain the higher**. In the words of John Piper, Once seen, you understand "the worth of having God ruling over you and, for you, over everything else. It's not hard to see why that is so valuable. If the omnipotent, all-wise God is ruling over all things for your joy, everything must be working for your good, no matter how painful. And in the end, God will triumph over all evil and all pain. So this kingdom is a treasure. . . . The treasure is seen in our forgiveness, imputed righteousness, acceptance with the Father, no condemnation, the fellowship of Jesus by his Spirit in our lives, progressive transformation into his likeness, gifts of the Spirit, usefulness in ministry, all things working together for our good." Look at the second part of verse 44, "Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." "The finder is delighted and ecstatic! And the point of this verse is not that the kingdom is bought, but that if it costs you everything you have, it's worth it. Notice two things: The man sold everything he had, and he did it with joy. In his joy, he does something about it. The kingdom of God is so valuable that it's worth losing everything on earth to receive it. That's the main point.

The apostle Paul expresses the same thing in Philippians 3:7-8, "Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." Do we not see the same response in the parable? The man sells all his belongings because he invests back into the kingdom. In Philippians 3:8, Paul suffers the loss of all things that he may gain Christ. Do you see it?

So the point here in Matthew 13:44 and in Philippians 3:8 is that God's kingdom is valuable and we need to treasure it more than everything else. You can't buy it. You get it freely because you want it more than you want anything else.

Piper illustrates this well, "It's as if a poor child entered a toy store and the owner said: you can have the best and most expensive toy in this store if you want it more than anything else. In other words, there is a condition for having the kingdom—for having

the King on your side and as your friend—but the condition is not wealth or power or intelligence or eminence. The condition is that you prize the kingdom more than you prize anything else. The point of selling everything in this parable is simply to show where your heart is. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). And if your heart is to have the kingdom above all things, then this passage comes true for you: “It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” To give you the kingdom!” Do you see the worth of what He has given?

As we have seen, we need to understand the value of the Kingdom of God. Secondly, we need to recognize the nature of the kingdom of God. This involves understanding the present and future kingdom. Let's first look at the present kingdom.

2. We need to recognize the nature of the kingdom of God.

a) The present kingdom.

In verse 44, notice that there is an immediate response to finding the kingdom of God. “...a man found (the treasure) and covered it up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” As the kingdom of God is revealed to him, his life is transformed in that moment. It was not just a promise for the future. In other words, when someone finds the Kingdom of God, there is present-day evidence in their life.

We can't miss the word “joy” in this verse: “In his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” The evidence comes out in a heart filled with joy. He is at a place in which he can lose all things and not be sad because he has gained Christ. Can you lose everything and still have joy If you know Christ?

Many people have claimed to have found joy in Christ and still struggle. If we are being honest, that can be true for all of us because we live in an unresolved tension between God's kingdom and the kingdom of darkness. We live in a world that is a state that is in-between the kingdom God which is colliding with the kingdom of darkness. Do you not see both whelms at work? The desires of this world and the desires of God. Why is it so hard? Is it because our hearts become complacent and unreceptive to God things? Is it because we stop fighting again the powers of darkness and return to living for ourselves? We so easily drift away from the treasure that we once found and miss out on what God wants to do.

John Piper says, *“I find in the Bible a divine command to forsake the low-yield, short-term, never-satisfying, person destroying, God-belittling pleasures of the of the world and to sell everything “with joy” in order to have the kingdom of heaven and thus enter into the job of your master. The kingdom now is limited in its scope and effects. And beware of assuming that all who are swept into the power of God’s kingdom are the children of the kingdom. The power of the kingdom gathers many (Matthew 7:22) into its net that will be cast out in the end because they loved healing and not holiness; they loved power and not purity; they loved wonders and not the will of God.”* To be honest, this verse scares me because of the implications. It says that we could be gathering with other Christians enjoying the atmosphere and completely missing the gospel. Do you know who Jesus is? That is not enough!

In the opening story, Hannah’s parents probably saw her for a couple minutes on most days. They lived under the same roof and passed by multiple times a day. Maybe exchanged words at times. But they didn’t really deeply know each other which ended in tragedy.

Does your life read that way? **The problem is that we are more focused on our goals and not kingdom goals.** One of the ways we can know that we are a child of the kingdom is when we become partners of God’s kingdom. **We need to become partners of the kingdom. How do we know if we are partners of the kingdom?** When we focus on His goals we build His kingdom. Recognize that this is the fruit of a changed heart - not how we become a child of God.

When the kingdom of God comes into our hearts we become more concerned with:

- Building character not comfort
- Caring for people not things
- Giving not just consuming
- Spiritual growth not entertainment
- Discipleship not just fellowship
- Community not selfish isolation
- His resources not our resources.

The kingdom of God through believers is working out the gospel into all aspects

of life. The essence of the church is to help the kingdom come by integrating the gospel into culture, family, education, government, the arts, business, and media. We help people find the treasure. We can't have the mindset that gospel is just for Christian culture or Sunday morning. If we want to see God use us we can't hoard our gifts, talents, resources and time. The Kingdom comes when we partner with Christ in everything that we do.

When you are partners with Christ – As a new song says, “you start to see the world in grace. You see the world in gospel. You see the world in love. You see the world in freedom.” You help people find Jesus. The good news is that the gospel breaks through our goals and our Kingdom. It reveals our motives and what we treasure.

John Willis Zumwalt says, *“The Church has no reason to exist except for the advancement of His Kingdom into areas it has never been before!”*

Luke 17:20–21, is a clear statement that Christ's own coming is the coming of the kingdom. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There! for behold, **the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.**”

What are the signs of the Kingdom of God?

Signs of the Kingdom of God:

- The presence of Jesus in the midst of his gathered people.
- The proclamation of the Gospel.
- Conversion and a new beginning
- The existence of the church, Jesus' new Messianic community, which unites in love.
- Deliverance from the forces of evil.
- The Holy Spirit is working in power and bearing fruit.

You cannot force the Kingdom of God, but you can participate in it. You can know you are a child of the kingdom by the fruits of the kingdom in your own life. Do you see the Kingdom of God working in your life? In your heart? In your family? In your work

place? In our church? Or are you dabbling in darkness? Seeing a whole lot of selfishness. Self-preservation. Self-elevation. Brokenness and so on.

But there is more! There will be a day when the kingdom of darkness will be defeated and we will see the future kingdom of God. We also need to recognize the Kingdom of God is advancing and not yet complete.

b) The future kingdom.

The future kingdom of God will be established at the return of Jesus. The Bible talks about a day when the Messiah will return and reign in peace. That day will bring no more sin, sickness, harm or tragedy, no more depression or spiritual warfare, no more racism, war, or death. This will all come with the final consummation of the kingdom. It will be a day in which all of humanity and all creation will be freed and made whole. God will be at the center of the kingdom, there will be rejoicing, peace, and justice. A holistic peace (*Shalom*) will be extended to the rest of the world. When the king comes – It will be a great day!

We get glimpses of the reign in the book of Revelation talks about the throne of God: We will hear, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (7:10). “The final chapter in God’s plan is to restore the universe to what it should be after the destruction of sin. (Revelation 17:11)

When the king comes again, he will defeat sin once for all in the sacrifice of himself. He will sit at the Father's right hand and reigns until all his enemies are under his feet. We need to seek the kingdom first—to discover the glory of King Jesus. The fulfillment of the kingdom has started, but the completion of the kingdom has not. By the grace of God, we can experience many kingdom blessings today. However, many are reserved for the second coming of Jesus.

As we have seen, we need to see the nature of the kingdom of God as both present and future. Lastly, we need to treasure the king of the kingdom of God.

3. We need to treasure the King of the kingdom of God.

If we dig a little deeper into scripture the treasure really is the King of the kingdom and the kingdom is secondary. Let’s move past the metaphor and move to the only one who makes us rich when we submit to Him.

How do we know such joy? You need to get to a place in your life in which you treasure Christ!

A couple of weeks ago, David Robbie was retelling me his story of how he changed from an unhappy selfish businessman to someone who would relinquish everything for something of greater value. He is a successful banker who spent his entire life building up the wealth of his own empire. David started searching and found something far greater. It all started when he was watching YouTube!

- A YouTube video artist was performing a hymn which led him to Central. He came to the first service and second service and nothing happened.
- The words “come as you are” were expressed before a prayer which powerfully impacted him.
- A life changing prayer. Something unexplainable happened.

The revelation of the kingdom of God began with a deep realization that he needed to change. He found a hidden treasure that was missing from his life. It was readily available, although he didn't see it. He said, “why did I have to wait until I was in my seventies until I found it.”

In John 15:11 Jesus says, “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” By finding and treasuring Jesus we find joy. Romans 14:17, says, *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*

How does one know that they have found the treasure? Joy. Peace. Righteousness.

When you truly treasure Jesus it's a joy response to make him known. Jesus must have first place in your life. **“We must always abandon anything that would stand in the way of wholehearted allegiance to Christ and the priorities of the kingdom.” Craig Blomberg**

How do we keep a high regard for Jesus when the world seems so desirable? Your ability to build the kingdom is a result of what Christ has done. Your ability to treasure Jesus comes from knowing Jesus. You can't do it on your own!

Piper says, “The King's righteousness is now already ours by faith. The King's Spirit is now already dwelling in us. The King's holiness is now already being produced

in us. The King's joy and peace have now already been given to us. The King's victory over Satan is now already ours as we use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The King's power to witness is now already available to us. And the King's gifts—the gifts of his Spirit—are now already available for ministry.” Do you see the kingdom coming in your own life?

Is the kingdom of darkness more present in your heart than the kingdom of God? What are you really living for? Do you care about the things of God? If so, it's because you haven't deeply treasured Jesus. We can't treasure the Kingdom without treasuring Jesus. The good news is that you can see what a changed heart looks like. Piper says, *“The goal of Treasuring Christ together is bringing as many people as possible into that kind of relationship with Christ. I want you to feel the burden—the joyful burden—that the leaders of this church feel. If we love Christ as our highest Treasure, and if we love people the way he did—ready to lay down his life even for his enemies—then we will labor to spread a passion for Christ to as many people as we can. We will labor in evangelism and missions and reformation and spiritual awakening. We will not be content to simply feed ourselves. If we treasure him, and if we love them, we will pray and give and labor to reach more and more and more and more people. Will we not? That's one burden we carry as leaders. How shall we fulfill our mission—to spread a passion for the supremacy of God? Spread. Spread. Spread. That's why Jesus came. That's what he sent us to do. Go make disciples. Draw more and more people into the everlastingly all-satisfying experience of knowing and treasuring Christ. Share your joy. Don't keep it to yourself.”* Shared joy increases joy.

We will give sacrificially toward the advance of the kingdom when we treasure Christ more than we treasure our possessions and our leisure activities—and when we see and love the vision.

Conclusion:

Jesus is the only treasure that meets our deepest poverty.

The first parable tells us that the treasure was hidden in a field. The man in the story represents many who walked across that field a thousand times and never seen the wealth that was lying six inches below the surface. Have you gone over the field so many times that you have made a path across it! But you still don't treasure Jesus! The

treasure is hidden, but it's not because God doesn't want you to see it; it is because you are blind and your heart wants lesser temporary things. In the words of MacLaren, "I pray you, look through the forms, look beneath the words of Scripture, ask God to clear your eyesight from the hallucinations of the dazzling present, and you will see the treasure that is hidden in the field."

Alexander MacLaren says, "*Jesus, is our true treasure, because that wealth, and that alone, meets the needs and wants of the human soul.*"

Are you concerned with the things of God?

Do you see the treasure Jesus is offering you? Or will you pass it by?

The apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:8, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things."