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**The Treasure & the Pearl**  
**Matthew 13:44-46**  
**Jeff Germo, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Forbes Magazine listed its wealthiest people in the world once more.

There are two hundred more billionaires in 2013 than there were in 2012. Carlos Slim of Mexico is in top place for the fourth year in a row. His net worth is about 73 billion USD. Bill Gates was in top place the year before that, and Warren Buffet in 2008. Prior to that Bill Gates took top spot for thirteen years running. Now he is just in second place. I think he's only worth 67 billion dollars now. Poor Bill.

How much is a billion dollars? I was sitting in Starbucks last Monday trying grapple with that question. And I came up with this; it's a lot. I cannot even begin to imagine what it would be like to own even 100<sup>th</sup> of that. That would be \$10,000,000. A billion dollars is one hundred times that. That's a lot of zeros at the end of the one. Does that make your mouth water? It's a lot of money.

Let me ask you a question;

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**What is God's kingdom worth to you?**

Remember the rich young ruler who ran up to Jesus and knelt down in front of Him and asked what he needs to do to gain eternal life. And Jesus, knowing his heart, told him to sell all his possessions and give them to the poor. And when the man heard the answer the Bible says,

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**Mark 10:22 (NLT)**

<sup>22</sup> *... the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.*

What is God's kingdom worth to you?

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**Matthew 13:44-46 (NLT)**

<sup>44</sup> *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.*

[5]

<sup>45</sup> *"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!*

We have two very short parables. One is just one verse and the other two verses. They are short, but packed with a powerful, punchy message. Remember, parables have one meaning. It's not like modern art that is open to interpretation.

Jesus always had one point that He was making. He wasn't just teaching a truth. He was looking for a response from His listeners. When Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all his possessions, He wanted a response from him. He wasn't just teaching him how to manage his money in God's kingdom. What he was doing was sticking a probe in his heart so that the man would see what was there and hopefully respond to Jesus. Unfortunately, that didn't happen.

Let me give you what I think these two short parables mean right from the start and then we will take a closer look at them. What Jesus is saying in these parables is this:

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**The kingdom of God is so valuable that losing everything on earth to gain it would be a bargain.**

In other words, the rich young ruler who turned away sad because he had many possessions turned down a great deal. Even if he had to give up all for the kingdom he would have been further ahead.

Here is the crux of parable; if you could choose between being one of the top ten on the billionaires' list and being a part of God's kingdom which would you choose?

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Or, an even harder question would be the one that Jesus put to the rich young ruler. He already had the wealth. He already had the prestige and position and knowledge and the accolades of people. If you were him would you be able to let it all go for the sake of the kingdom?

That is the crux of these parables and Jesus was looking for a response from his audience, and he's looking for one from us.

Let's take a closer look.

[8]

**Matthew 13:44-46 (NLT)**

<sup>44</sup> *"The kingdom of heaven..."*

We have already said many times that the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God is God's effective rule. It's where what God wants done gets done. There is one sense in that God's kingdom is not yet here in its fullness, and it won't be until Jesus returns to take us home. But, in another sense, as Jesus said, it has come. It is within reach of everyone. We all have a choice whether or not we will allow God to rule in our hearts. If we choose to allow Him in then we are saying that we want His kingdom to come and rule. His kingdom is here.

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<sup>44</sup> *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field"*

Treasure hidden in a field. I can remember as a kid reading about pirates burying treasure. And in my very wild imagination I saw myself finding treasure like that and dreaming about what I would do if I found it. And as a kid I recall walking home from school hoping that I would stumble across a bag full of money that some criminal hid. When I grew up I realized that it's an unreasonable past-time to keep my eyes looking down while I walked in hopes of finding lost treasure.

The people that were listening to Jesus tell this story, however, would have thought that finding treasure hidden in a field was not so unreasonable. It was actually common practice to hide your valuables in your field to protect them from bandits and marauders. They would place their jewels or savings in ceramic jars, seal them up, dig a hole in their field and cover it up so that they could retrieve it later when they needed it. Sometimes, though, they would forget where they buried it, or the owner would die before he was able to retrieve it. So, what Jesus was talking about here was quite possible and he had their attention.

<sup>44</sup> *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure..."*

Jesus is placing a value on the kingdom of heaven, not a price tag, as if it could be bought, but a value. He wants His listeners to ask themselves, "What is it worth to me to have God rule my heart and life?"

100 million dollars. 1 billion dollars. How much is your soul worth?

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<sup>44</sup> *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement,..."*

Some of the translations say, *"in his joy..."* Why was the man filled with joy? Why was he excited? Because he knew that he found something of great value. How valuable was it to him? What was he willing to give up for this treasure that he happened across in this field?

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*In his excitement he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.*

The kingdom of heaven is likened to that treasure. What does Jesus say it is worth? It is worth everything. This man in the story sees the treasure that he has stumbled across in the field and he immediately does some calculations. What is this worth to me? And it doesn't take him very long to figure out that what he has found is priceless. It is worth giving up everything that he has in order to keep it.

Here's what Jesus said to his apprentices in Matthew 16.

[12]

**Matthew 16:24–26 (NLT)**

<sup>24</sup>...*“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. <sup>26</sup> And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”*

Doesn't this sound like the same thing that Jesus is posing in these parables?

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What He is asking is this; **How badly do you want the kingdom? What's it worth to you?**

Paul basically paraphrased the intent of this parable in Philippians 3.

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**Philippians 3:7–9 (NLT)**

<sup>7</sup> *I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. <sup>8</sup> Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.*

What's Paul saying here? He is saying the same thing that Jesus is saying in the parables. If you read the verses that precede these you can see that Paul lists his credentials. He was very educated. He was religiously passionate. He had the best bloodline. He had everything he needed. And he said that he would, give it all up if he had to for sake of Christ. He said it all means nothing when he compares it to Christ.

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The question that Jesus poses in these parable is this; **What's worth more to you, your earthly temporal life, or the kingdom? Having Jesus rule your heart.**

[16]

**Luke 12:15 (NLT)**

<sup>15</sup> *Then he said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.”*

[17]

**Matthew 6:19-21 (NLT)**

**19 “Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.**

Jesus is saying that there is more to life than what we can see, touch, smell, taste and hear. All of these things are temporal. They will not last. They may give us some short-term happiness, but it will not last. Friends, I think that central to this parable is the word, 'joy', or **excitement** in the NLT.

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God is not up in heaven trying to rain on our parade. He is not a bully that wants to see us squirm and be miserable. Quite the opposite. Jesus came that we might have abundant life (John 10:10). In John 15:11 He said that His desire is that we be full of joy. In John 16:22 He said that no one would be able to take that joy away from us.

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**John 17:13 (NLT)**

<sup>13</sup> *“Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy.”*

What is the kingdom of God all about?

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**Romans 14:17 (NLT)**

<sup>17</sup> *For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

I could go on and on with Scripture about the joy that is ours in the kingdom. As C.S. Lewis said, **“It’s not that our desires are too great. It’s that we actually settle for too little.”**

Let’s take a look at the second parable. The point is the same as the first one with one slight difference.

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**Matthew 13:45-46 (NLT)**

<sup>45</sup> *“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!*

Can you notice the subtle difference here? In the first parable the man just happened upon the treasure. He stumbled upon it. In the second parable he is actually in search of it. He knows that there is something of immeasurable value to be found if he just searches hard enough, and he is willing to give up everything for it.

The kingdom of God is worth the pursuit. As Robin said last week, we are Jesus seekers, which is why we asked you to get out of your pews to come up and participate in the Lord's Supper.

In a Christianity Explored class I teaching several years ago I explained to the participants, who were all unchurched and very wary about what we call Christianity, about life in God’s kingdom being about living between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet.’ I explained that God has already saved us through the death and resurrection of Jesus 2000 years ago. That’s in the past and there is nothing that we can do to earn it. It has been done. And I explained that we will be saved, in the future tense, when Christ returns to take us home. We can’t put any effort into this future reality.

But, I went on, we are also being saved in the present continuous tense. Life in God’s kingdom now is about living between the already and the not yet. It is about submitting to the rule of God in our lives so that by the power of His Spirit He can transform us into the likeness of Christ so that we can take on the fruit of the Spirit.

It’s about learning how to love God and people. It’s about allowing God’s Spirit to change us into the kinds of people who do these things because Jesus has transformed us on the inside. There was a bit of a pause in the conversation and one of the ladies said, “So really it’s about the meaning of life.” Well, I hadn’t really thought of it like that but yes, that is exactly what it is.

The man in these two parables found the meaning of life. The one stumbled upon it and the other searched diligently for it. But, both found it and saw that there is nothing of greater value and they would be fools to not do what it took to gain the treasure.

Jim Elliott, whom many of you know, was a missionary to Ecuador who was martyred while trying to reach the Auca Indians for Christ said,

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**“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”**

Thomas a Kempis, in *The Imitation of Christ*, wrote,

[23]

**“For a little reward men make a long journey; for eternal life many will scarce lift a foot once from the ground.”**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, another Christian who was martyred for his faith in Christ under the Hitler regime in Nazi Germany, wrote this in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*.

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**“Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field. For the sake of it, a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy, for which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for**

*whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble. It is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.*

[25]

*Costly grace is the gospel, which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly, because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner.*

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*Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son. Yes we're bought at a price, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the incarnation of God."*

**What is the kingdom worth?**

John Piper in a sermon a couple years ago told a story about a pastor friend of his whose sister lost her husband to cancer earlier in the year. He was in his fifties and had been a faithful follower of Christ. She was sitting by his special bed set up for him at home, wiping his forehead in his last hours.

She seemed steady and joyful. They had a visitor who became irritated and asked, 'How can you be so happy when something so evil is happening?' And I'm sure her answer shocked the visitor. She said, "My husband deserves to go to hell (like you and me). And because of Christ, in a few hours my husband will be with God in heaven. Is that not worth rejoicing about?"

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*In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.*

Is it not worth everything to know that you have invited the Almighty Creator of the universe to rule your heart and life? His joy in the discovery of the kingdom and the discovery of meaning is so great that there is only one response and that is to forsake all else for the kingdom.

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*Life in the kingdom is not a painful exercise in becoming religious. It is a joyous relationship with our Creator because of our Redeemer and through the Holy Spirit.*

And that, friends, is worth everything. And do you want to know what is the most amazing thing of all.

Jesus says in Luke 12:32,

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**Luke 12:32 (NLT)**

<sup>32</sup> *"So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.*

He finds pleasure in giving His kingdom to us. What could bring more joy than that?



Pray – [All for Jesus is the next song]



*The Treasure and the Pearl*  
The Week of September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
Matthew 13:44-46

**Objective of this study:** **To wrestle with the importance you place on the Kingdom in your life. How does it direct your life?**

**WORSHIP (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Take five minutes of complete silence and allow the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart.
2. At the end of the five minutes of silence have someone open in a short prayer.
3. Sing a song of meditation or praise together.

**WELCOME (5 – 10 minutes)**

Icebreaker: What is a magazine that you subscribe to? Why do you like it?

**WORD (20 – 30 minutes)**

1. What stood out for you from the sermon?
2. Read Mark 10:17-31
  - a. Don't spend too much time on this passage, but just take note of Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler. How does Jesus probe his heart? There is a difference between the man's perception of himself and what Jesus sees. What does Jesus' probe find?
3. Read Matthew 13:44-46
  - a. There are two short parables here. What are the differences between the two?
  - b. What is Jesus' main point and how is he trying to get his listeners to respond in this parable?
4. Read Philippians 3:7-9
  - a. In verse 7 Paul says, "I once thought these *things* were valuable..." What things?
  - b. What does he see as more important than those *things*?
5. Corollary passages if you have time:
  - a. Luke 12:15
  - b. Matthew 6:19-21
  - c. John 17:13; Luke 12:32

**Work (20 – 30 minutes)**

**Remember:** God's goal for us is that we would be transformed by the power of his Spirit. That won't happen unless we come clean and allow him to do a work in our hearts. Please be as honest as you can with these next questions. **WE ARE ALL UNDER CONSTRUCTION!**

1. Think of the different spheres you operate in: home, school, work, finances, leisure etc.: What difference should Jesus and his kingdom make in these areas?
2. Has the kingdom really taken precedence in all areas of your life?
3. What has the Holy Spirit been saying to you through this study?
4. Are there areas in your life that you haven't given Jesus control of?

**PRAYER**

Record your prayers in a journal each week and report back about how you saw God work. Celebrate together.