

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 August 2020

Preacher: Nick Louw

[0 : 00] Good morning everyone. We're now going to look at the parable of the hidden treasure in some more detail. And so keep your Bibles open at Matthew 13 verse 44. We are all experts at making value judgments. No matter what your age, no matter how much experience at buying and selling you have, we're all pretty early in life. We become experts at making value judgments.

So you probably know if you are preparing supper and you go to spa and you see that there are avocados for 30 rand each, and they're not even those big ones, they're those kind of small stunted ones, you're probably not going to go for that unless you're desperate for avocados.

But if boys and girls, on the other hand, you find out that the Lego Millennium Falcon, the big one, is on sale for 50 rand, I bet you you would spend your pocket money, if you have saved up 50 rand, on buying that.

Well, maybe not girls. Maybe the boys would be more keen for the Millennium Falcon. But girls, what about if the Heartlake Grand Hotel was on sale for 50 rand?

Wouldn't you get that? I mean, these are some pretty good Lego kits. The Millennium Falcon, I know, goes for 16,000 rand on take a lot. And so for anyone, that is a great deal.

[1 : 25] Even if you're not into Lego or Star Wars, it's really worth getting that. Question is, why would you spend 50 rand on the Lego set, and you wouldn't be happy to spend 30 rand, which is technically less money, on the avocado?

Well, because you have made a value judgment, and you know that the value of the Lego set is worth far more than 50 rand, but the value of the avocado isn't even worth 30 rand.

And so, the more valuable something is, the more you'll be happily willing to give up in order to get it. Well, in this parable we're looking at this morning, Jesus is saying the same thing about following Him.

He's saying the more that you realize how valuable it is to follow Him, the more you will be happily willing to give up in order to do that.

He describes it in this parable of a man who makes a value judgment, a man who stumbles across a treasure in a field and realizes how valuable it is.

[2 : 33] In fact, He realizes that it's far more valuable than the cost of giving up everything He has in order to buy that field. And He happily gives it up.

We see, if you look at verse 44, then in His joy He goes and sells everything He has and buys that field. He's not reluctant. He happily gives up everything He has.

Why is He happy to do that? Well, because He realizes He's gaining something of a much greater value. And that's really what this parable is about. It's a simple parable, but it has a profound point to make, and I think a profound challenge to all of us who call ourselves Christians.

And so I want to see three things, three important truths about this treasure in this parable that tell us about the kingdom and I think challenge our view on what it is to be part of the kingdom.

So let's look at those now. Now, the first truth that we see in this parable about the treasure is that it's hidden. That's the first thing we discover. It's a hidden treasure. Not many people know that it's there.

[3 : 39] And Jesus says in the same way that the kingdom and its value is currently in this age hidden. And you look around, you don't see in front of your eyes the kingdom of God.

It's a hidden kingdom and its value is more often than not underestimated by people. There's a story, a true story. In 1986, a guy called Roy Wettstein was shopping for gems.

He went to a market and there were a whole lot of stalls selling different gems. And he came across a guy selling in a kind of ice cream container agates.

They are these like pretty stones. You've probably come across them. Very attractive, not worth a whole lot. But they're nice attractive stones to collect. But then as he was scratching on these agates, the guy said, you know, you can take any \$15 a stone.

And he found this kind of rather dull, large-ish gray rock that didn't look like the rest of them. And he said, how much for this? And the guy was willing to give it up for just \$10 because it didn't look as pretty as the agates.

[4 : 48] And he bought it. And then he went and got it evaluated. And it turned out that he had just bought the world's largest star sapphire, 1900 carats.

And he got it estimated at over \$2 million. Now, the agates that were with that stone when he bought it were much prettier than it. But the real value was in something that couldn't yet be seen. And Jesus is saying the kingdom is like that. Following him is like that. When you follow Jesus, the benefits on your life aren't necessarily visible immediately.

Now, there are great benefits to following Jesus and living according to the Bible. You have a better marriage. You have a better family life. You generally have a more fulfilled life.

But you still suffer. Same as everyone else who doesn't follow Jesus. You still get sick. You still lose loved ones. Life is still hard. It doesn't look on the surface like following Jesus really solves anything.

[5 : 54] It's hidden. It's hidden value. And yet, what Jesus is saying in this parable is this is what the kingdom is like. The kingdom is like a man who finds treasure and then sells everything he has to get it.

In other words, even though it doesn't look like much, what you will find in this world is that there are people who are willing to give up everything in order to follow Jesus.

Why is that? Well, it's because of the second thing we discover about this treasure. And that it is not just a treasure that is hidden.

It's a treasure that is found by many people. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

And so here Jesus is talking about those who find the value of the kingdom. Those who follow him. Those who realize and believe what the gospel is and what Jesus has come on earth to do.

[7 : 01] He says there are people who have discovered something of immeasurable value. They found it and that changes their lives. And I think we as Christians, those who have technically found the treasure, still need reminding over and over again that what we have found is of more value than we could ever imagine.

It is so precious to know the gospel and follow Jesus. And I think those who have been Christians for a long time, myself included, can quite easily take for granted the treasure that we have.

And we have got to realize that what we have found is as valuable, more valuable by far, than what this parable is describing. A man who finds a treasure.

It is more valuable than winning the lottery. It is more valuable than having all the money in the world. This man sold everything because he had found something of such immeasurable value. We have got to ask ourselves, is that how we see the gospel?

Is that how we see following Jesus? Because that is how those who have found the treasure should view it. And many people find it throughout history, around the world, different cultures, different languages, different upbringings.

[8 : 17] There are people all over the world, different people, who find this treasure and realize its value. Different types of people. In fact, if you look just at the next two verses, we see another parable.

I'll read it again. But it's a very similar parable, but it's got an important difference. Have a look from verse 45. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.

When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it. Okay, so here you've got a guy, again, who finds something of immeasurable, priceless value, and again sells everything he has and buys it.

But what's the difference? Did you notice it? The merchant was looking for it. The man in the field wasn't. The merchant, his whole job was to seek out and find these priceless pearls.

He was searching for it for a long time before he found it. The man in the field wasn't looking for it. He just stumbled across it. But they both find something of immeasurable value in the end.

[9 : 24] And they both respond to it in the same way, by selling everything they have. And in the same way, finding the kingdom, finding the truth of following Jesus and the value therein, is something that some people have been looking for for years and years, while other people just stumble across it.

You've got examples of this in the Bible. For example, you've got Nicodemus, this very religious, devout Jewish man, who has spent his whole life seeking after God, and seeking the kingdom that the Old Testament prophets spoke about, this future where people will live under God's good rule without death and suffering and pain in a good world.

And he wants to be part of it. And he wants to know God and enjoy God forever. And he's been seeking how he can make sure he's part of that kingdom. You've got another guy, Cornelius, in Acts, chapter 10.

He's not a Jew. He's a Roman. But he also is a devout man. He's seeking after God. He wants God. He's probably spent much of his life seeking after the true God.

And both of those men find what they're looking for in the gospel of Jesus. They both come to realize that in Jesus and His death and resurrection is access to the will that God has always planned for people, that we always long for deep down inside.

[10 : 52] When we look around this world, and those two men must have looked around in this world as a Jew under Roman occupation, as a Roman soldier having seen war and blood and death, he must be going, there must be more than this.

There must be a future for my life. Surely it's not just living and growing old and dying. And people have those questions. And lots of religious people spend their lives seeking out answers. Where am I going? What is this life about? Well, those men and many others who have been asking those questions their whole life found those answers in Jesus and realized what a treasure it was.

But then there are others who weren't looking for it and stumbled across it. You think of the jailer, the Roman jailer in Philippi. He was just a Roman soldier going about his job.

He wasn't looking for anything in particular. And yet, he had an experience in the jail when Paul and Silas were jailed there. He just had a flash of the power of God.

[11 : 54] He realized that he was a sinner, that he was in a dangerous position, that he was mortal, and that he needed his sins forgiven. And he asked Paul and Silas what he must do.

And they shared with him the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he and his whole family believed. And so he found this great treasure because he realized that in the death of Jesus, he can have his sins forgiven.

Even though he wasn't looking for it. He didn't go to work that morning looking for the greatest treasure in the world. But he found it. And you might be one or the other if you're watching this this morning.

And maybe you're not a Christian. You might still be seeking. Maybe that's what's brought you to watch this. Maybe you're curious. And you do have questions.

And you look around in the world. And you wonder, is this all there is? Surely there must be more than this. Surely there's a future for me and for humanity.

[12 : 50] What happens after I die? And you've been asking these questions and wondering. Or you might be someone who is quite happy with your life. You're not really looking. You don't even know why you're watching this today.

And yet you are. Well, whoever you are, I want to assure you, Jesus promises that hidden here, in his teaching, in his word, is a treasure of such immeasurable value that when you find it, you will be willing to give up everything else to keep it.

And then finally, the third important truth we learn about this treasure is that it's a treasure that is secured. So these men who find it, both of them, do something to make sure they can keep that treasure for themselves.

And in the same way, Jesus is saying, if you've seen the value in him and following him, if you've uncovered the treasure of the kingdom, you need to make sure that you do everything you can to keep it.

And in both these stories, what you realize is that these men, although they pay a great cost in order to secure this treasure, they're quite happy to do that.

[14:09] It's not technically a sacrifice. A sacrifice is when you give more than you get. But neither of these men do that. They only pay the cost because they know they're going to get something much greater.

I mean, if you spend 50 rand on a Lego Millennium Falcon that's worth 16,000 rand, you wouldn't consider that a great sacrifice. And you don't expect people to look at you and go, wow, what a sacrificial guy.

No, because it's worth it. Well, in the same way, Jesus is saying, yes, it's a great cost to follow him. It will mean many changes in your life.

It'll mean a whole new direction of life. It'll mean a reconsideration of what you're doing in your life and what you do with what you have. And it'll, in many cases, call for great cost to follow Jesus. But, for those who have discovered the value of the kingdom, it is a no-brainer. It is so worth it. And that's what Christian faith is. Christian faith is not a blind faith that expects you to make unreasonable sacrifices.

[15:18] It's a faith following Jesus that calls for a cost. But it's a cost which is calculated. It's something that we as Christians realize is worth the cost because of what we gain from following Jesus and what we gain in the future.

The new creation, resurrection, everything we could have ever hoped for, everything that we search for in this life and can't find. Jesus promises beyond the shadow of a doubt, real, bodily, physical resurrection.

In the new creation, God has always intended for people. That is so worth anything in this life. And so, Christian faith is not blind faith. It's calculated faith that realizes and knows that the cost is worth it because the gain far outweighs any cost we could pay in this life.

And the truth is, as long as you think that it will cost more to follow Christ than what you will actually gain from it, you will never truly follow Christ.

And this is really a challenge that Jesus lays out to a rich, young Jewish man. In Mark chapter 10, this guy comes to him and says, Well, you know, what must I do to inherit the kingdom?

[16:39] I want to. Just tell me what to do. I want the kingdom. He's one of the guys that is searching, that is looking for God. And he wants to know how he can secure his place in God's future kingdom.

And Jesus, then after a little discussion about convincing this guy that he'll never be good enough to inherit God's kingdom by himself, Jesus then says, Well, follow me and give everything up.

This is a challenge that he lays out to this guy. Give up your money in order to come follow me. And he's not willing to do that. He went away grieving because he had many possessions. And now, Jesus doesn't necessarily expect that of everyone.

But in this case, he was testing whether this guy valued following him, whether he had really seen the value in following Jesus, and whether it was worth more than everything else he had.

Now, the demand, the cost of following Jesus will look different for different people. For most of us, it'll look different to this guy who had to sell everything he had.

[17:46] But in every case, it calls for a complete investment. Not a hedging of your portfolio.

You know, investors often will invest little bits in different things to kind of hedge their bets in case one doesn't work out. Well, Jesus doesn't want us to try hedge our bets when it comes to the kingdom and following him.

He is calling for a complete investment where we put all our eggs in one basket, and that is following him. That is what he was challenging this rich young man to do.

And that is what he is challenging each of us to do. And we will be willing to do it only if we see the kingdom of immeasurable value, more valuable than anything else.

And then if we do, then investing everything in it won't be a big ask. It'll be a no-brainer. An example of someone who invested his whole life into the kingdom is the apostle Paul.

[18:49] And we read in his letters why he was willing to give up so much in order to pursue the kingdom and to grow the kingdom because he realized the value of it.

Have a look at some of these references. 2 Corinthians 4.17 He says, For our momentary light affliction.

Now this is a guy who went through more suffering than most of us will go through in our lives. And he called it momentary light affliction. Our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable, eternal weight of glory.

He had a vision of where he was going in eternity and what the age to come consisted of that made him, when he looked at that, it made him look at his troubles in this life and go, Ach!

They're nothing. They're momentary. They're light compared to where I'm going. He was fixed so much on that that he didn't mind the cost of following Jesus in this life.

[19 : 55] Philippians 3.7-11 He says, But everything that was gained to me I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings and be conformed to his death assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

So again, because he had this vision and this pursuit of the value of the future that Jesus had opened up to him through his death on the cross, he considered all the things he used to consider valuable in this life, he considered them as what he calls dung or rubbish or trash.

In fact, that's a label that we have on the side of our rubbish bin at St. Mark's so that everybody who walks past on bin day will get a reminder that if you follow Christ, you have gained something that in comparison, everything in this life is rubbish.

[21 : 17] And he also says in Ephesians 1, 18, he says, I pray, and he's praying for the Ephesian Christians, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

He's praying for these Christians to realize the value of what they have in the kingdom. He knows that the best thing for these Christians in order to live the Christian life and wholeheartedly follow Jesus is to first just have their eyes opened to what they have in Christ.

See, Paul's life expressed in so many different ways that he had found a treasure that was of immeasurable value.

People could see that. In fact, in Philippians at the beginning, he writes that he's jailed, so he writes Philippians from jail, and he writes that his imprisonment, his suffering, has actually encouraged the brothers and sisters, the Christians in Rome to be even more keen to share the gospel.

Why is that? Why would him being imprisoned encourage Christians more? Because they are inspired by him and what he's willing to give up for Jesus because it shows them what value the gospel is and his life exudes the fact that he has discovered something of immeasurable value.

[22 : 53] My question to you this morning, if you're a Christian, is does your life display to those around you that you've discovered something of immeasurable value?

Many people look at Christians and they don't realize that they have discovered something of priceless immeasurable value and the reason is because their lives don't show that.

I mean, what would it look like if you discovered something of immeasurable value or if you received something of immeasurable value? If you won the lottery, 20 million rand, let's say, would the people around you, your friends and family, see something that displays to them that you've just won the lottery?

I think they would. You would probably be a little happier than you normally are, right? You would probably tell them. You would probably make it known. You might even post it on social media.

Now, in the same way, if the value of the kingdom is what Jesus says it is, then the people around us should be able to see that we've discovered something of great value.

[24 : 05] We should exude joy like Paul did even in our sufferings. We should be happy to tell them on whatever means that we can share why this is so valuable to us.

You know, someone who's won the lottery, you don't see them going, yay, I've got so much money now, but I don't want to tell anyone because they might think I'm weird. That's not what happens if you found something of immeasurable value.

And if it is the case that you find something that you need to secure, what you'll do is make sure that you do everything you can to secure it, right? If the lottery people, now by the way, I don't really support the lottery, I don't think it's a very wise thing to spend your money on, but it's an illustration.

If you had won the lottery and they say you've got to come and register your claim and you'll get the money in your bank account, just come to this office at 9 o'clock on Tuesday morning, I think you'll set your alarm for way before 9.

I think you'll make sure that you're there so that you can secure that treasure. Well, Jesus is saying that if you found the treasure of the gospel, if you found the surpassing value of knowing him and knowing where you're going and knowing that your sins are forgiven through his death on the cross and you believe that and you believe that it's opened the way to eternal life for you, then Jesus is saying securing that, making sure that you follow him in your life should be your number one priority above every other thing.

[25 : 39] It should be the first thing you think of when you wake up and the last thing you think of when you go to bed as you open the word, as you meditate on these truths, as you grow in the faith, as you strengthen your faith to follow Jesus and as you help others to discover the treasure of immeasurable value that you have.

That is the true and right response to having found this hidden treasure. Will you live a life this week that shows those around you that you have found it?

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the immeasurable treasure of the gospel that in Jesus we have far more than we could ever imagine.

That you haven't even revealed to us a fraction of what you have planned for your people. Help us to realize the value of this treasure that we found in the gospel as Christians.

So much so that we exude it, that we live lives that show those around us that we have a great treasure and that we will, as Peter tells us, always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us for this hope that we have.

[26 : 52] Help us to live lives that cause people to ask questions. And I pray for anybody watching who has not yet discovered that treasure. Help them, Lord, to realize that hidden in the word of Christ, hidden in his life and words and works, is a treasure of such immeasurable value that when they find it, they will be willing to give up everything to keep it.

Help them, Lord, to seek out this treasure and to study the words of Jesus and to listen to him so that they will find this treasure too. And we pray, Lord, that you would help us to make this treasure known to others as we go out into the world this week or however we might communicate with others in lockdown.

Help us, Lord, still to be able to exude the value of the gospel in our lives. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.