

The Hidden Treasure of Easter

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[0 : 0 0] Well, the events we are celebrating today, we must not let them pass us by easily. Because if you think about it, these events of Easter are the single most important events! Because what happened at Easter reveals God's plans for humanity.

That God does not want death to win. And that's what Easter Sunday is about. That's what we're celebrating. Death should win because of our sins against God.

But God wants life to overcome death. Which it did on Easter Sunday in Jesus rising physically, bodily from the dead. And it can in us because of what He did on Friday when He died for our sins on the cross.

These are the truths of Easter and they are epic. And these truths are valuable. That's what we've got to realize. They have great value to us. They're more valuable than anything we can ever learn.

You can go to university. You can go to school. You can learn a lot of information about our world. But what we remember on Easter, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, they are the most valuable truths we could ever learn.

[illegible]

The truths that he is bringing into their lives. In fact, it was two parables. They're little parables. These are little simple stories that Jesus tells, but with a deeper meaning.

And these two parables I want us to read because they're meant to tell us the same thing. They're meant to tell us how to respond to something that we receive of great value. And so let's read them and let's try to work out what this is. Matthew 13 from verse 44, Jesus says, 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.

Okay, so two simple parables. I want us to think about what they mean. Two people, a guy in a field, and a merchant, two different things of great value, but the same response, which is that they both do something to make this treasure theirs. You see that? It's a simple story. It's easy to understand.

[3 : 27] But what do you think Jesus is trying to say to us through these parables? What is he talking about? Well, we don't have to guess because Jesus tells us what he's talking about in the opening of these parables. He says, the kingdom of heaven is like this. In other words, he's saying the kingdom of heaven is something that is so valuable that when you learn about it, you will want to make sure you do something to make it yours. That's what these parables are about. But what is the kingdom of heaven, and why is it so valuable? Well, we at church have been learning about that from Matthew. We've been going through Matthew, and we've been learning about what Jesus has come to tell us about the kingdom of heaven. And what we realized is that it's not what we think it is. The kingdom of heaven is not about some nice place you go when you die, if you've been a good person, and you know, you fly away and exist in some other dimension somewhere in the clouds. That's kind of often what people think when they hear the word heaven. But Jesus came to teach us that the kingdom of heaven is actually not about flying away when we die. It's about God's solution coming down to this world. It's much more real, and it's much more exciting than we think it is. The kingdom of heaven is about heaven's reality coming down to earth.

The kingdom of heaven is about a restored relationship between God and human beings, and his plans to undo the curse of this world that we feel every day and that we are under.

Our creator has great plans to undo that, and that's what the kingdom of heaven is about, to remove pain and death, to remove what is wrong with this world, and to give us abundant life in a restored creation which the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday is just a foretaste of. That is what the kingdom of heaven is. It's epic, and it's huge, and Jesus came to tell us about it.

The kingdom of heaven is actually everything you've ever wanted. You just don't know it yet. I mean, what do you currently want in your life? And that's an easy question to ask because everybody wants something. At any point in life you want something. I want you to think, what do you want right now? What do you currently want in your life? Do you want a successful career? Do you want a life partner to share life with? Do you want a new car? You want something, okay? What is it right now?

What are you pursuing? What are your energies and your mind focused on? What are you thinking about in those spare moments in your day? That'll show you what you're pursuing, what you want.

[6 : 25] Well, in the second parable Jesus gives you about this guy, this merchant searching for pearls, that's what he's pursuing. He's pursuing pearls. That's his thing. That's what he wants. And the more pearls he gets, the happier he is. So what are your pearls right now? What are the things that if you get them will make you happy? Everybody can answer that question if you think about it.

What are your pearls? Well, Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is a far more valuable pearl that when you discover it will outshine all the other pearls. That's what he says the kingdom of heaven is in these parables. It's something that will, when you get it, will make all the other things that you chase after look insignificant. Because the truth is none of these things really satisfy, right? None of these other pearls that we're chasing really give us deep, ultimate satisfaction that we're looking for. They're the best of what you can get in a broken world, sure.

These things, a new car, you know, a nice family, a nice job, sure, that's great. But they're temporary and they don't ultimately satisfy. But what Jesus is telling us in these parables is the kingdom of heaven is something that is better than this world and anything that this world can give you. Because the kingdom of heaven is what we were made for. It's what you were made for.

Which we know deep down is not the world like it is. Deep down, we know that the world like it is, this is not what we were made for. We were made for something more. And the kingdom of heaven is what that is.

The kingdom of heaven is the thing that will truly satisfy the human soul. And Jesus came into our broken world to make that kingdom known to us. There's a treasure here. There's a treasure here in his words of immense value. In the midst of this broken world, there's a treasure that will outshine everything else you chase after. You've just got to find it. Because not everyone does. And that's another thing we learn in this parable. Did you notice? It's a hidden treasure. It's a hidden treasure.

[8 : 52] That's how Jesus starts. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. In both of these parables, actually, the value of the thing is not widely known. The man who stumbles upon the treasure, he didn't know it was there. Nobody else knew it was there. The merchant, he is the only person who knows the value, the true value of this pearl that he finds. It's not public knowledge.

I guess a modern example would be maybe a financial trader who finds that there's a deeply undervalued stock, and he buys it, and he makes a huge profit. It's often happened because no one else knew the value of this stock. Well, Jesus is saying that is also true of the kingdom that he's brought to earth.

Most people don't know its value. I mean, if they did, everyone would want it. Churches would be packed every Sunday. But so many don't know the value of this kingdom because it's hidden. And that's why so many pass it by. That's why so many people have no interest in becoming Christians. They honestly don't see what all the fuss is about. I mean, they don't have a problem with Christianity. It's great. It's nice. They'll come to church from time to time on Easter, Christmas, when there's a special thing on.

But they don't see the point of doing much more than that. Well, the reason is because they haven't found the treasure yet. For a majority of people in this world, this treasure is something that still needs to be discovered. And that can happen in different ways. I don't know if you noticed the difference between these two parables. They're very similar, but there's a major difference between them. Did you notice what it is? The first guy, he wasn't looking for it. He stumbles upon it. He stumbles upon something he wasn't looking for. The second merchant, he was seeking, he was spending his whole life seeking out this fine pearl, which he eventually gets. And Jesus says it's the same with the kingdom. Some people will spend their life seeking God and seeking meaning and seeking answers to their big questions. They're deeply religious people. And for many of them, when they turn and they read the gospel accounts in the pages of the Bible, then they discover Jesus and they realize that this is who they were looking for their whole lives. One of Jesus' disciples, a guy called Nathaniel, was like this.

He was a deeply religious Jew. He sought after God. He studied the Torah. And then one day, some friends came to him and said, hey, there's this new rabbi in town. You should come in here. He's saying amazing things about the kingdom. And he was a little bit skeptical at first, but he went and he met Jesus.

[12 : 03] And when he did, he realized that this man is who he's been searching for his whole life. But then there are other people who discover this kingdom without having looked for it. They weren't looking for it. They were just living their lives. Maybe they were dragged to church on an Easter by a friend or by a family member. And they weren't really interested in what the preacher was saying.

But then something actually sticks. And this has happened in church a lot of times. I know people who weren't interested. They weren't looking. But then they heard something from the word of God. And they realized, they met, they met the God who they were never looking for.

And their lives changed. Peter, Jesus' disciple, was like this. He was a fisherman. He was just going about his life. He just wanted to catch fish. And then Jesus came up to him and he met Jesus.

Jesus called him and he realized that this is the man who can bring him to God who he was never looking for, who can bring him answers that he was never asking questions about, who can bring meaning to his life that he never thought he needed. And so you see, there are various ways that people come to discover this treasure. But however they do, you know it when they do. And that's what these parables show us. They show us what happens when a person discovers this treasure. Because the same thing happens in both of these parables. They both respond in the same way. Did you notice that? I'm going to read again, end of the first parable, the man who discovers the treasure in a field. Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. And then the end of the second parable, on finding the one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. You see, they respond in the same way. They realize the value of what they've discovered and they do something to get it. And what they do is quite a drastic thing. They sell all, not some, all.

Jesus tells us they sell all of what they have. It's a drastic response, but it's not an irrational one. It makes sense because of the value of what they've found. In fact, we're told in the first parable, in his joy he sells all. In his joy. How can you enjoy giving up all your stuff? Well, only if you know that what you're gaining is worth far more. He makes a value judgment. That's what it is.

[14 : 51] It's a value judgment. We make value judgments every day when we buy something from the shop. Every time you buy something, you're making a value judgment that the thing you're gaining is worth more than the money you're giving to get it. Otherwise, you wouldn't buy it. That's a value judgment. Well, that's how it is with the kingdom. Jesus says, if you want to be part of it, you've got to make a value judgment in your life where you realize that this pearl is worth letting go of the others. It's worth putting aside the other pursuits in your life and making the kingdom the most important thing in your life. That's how you know someone has truly found it. When someone truly finds this and they realize the value, they will inevitably do that. That's how you know they've found it. They will prioritize the things of the kingdom. They will prioritize church and God's people and God's word and they will pursue the kingdom at the cost of other things and they will do that with joy, not with reluctance.

And so are you one of them? Because there's a great treasure. There's a great treasure buried in the midst of this broken, frustrating world. It's the kingdom that Jesus came to bring and he died and he rose again to make available to you. It's a great treasure, this new reality that he opened up to us, this new life, this new hope. The question is, have you found it yet? Have you found it yet?

Have you found the one pearl that has caused you to give up all the others? Have you found the treasure that has caused you to joyfully put aside other things to gain it?

Because if you haven't done that, if there are things in your life that are just more important to you, that this is not a priority to you, well then, according to Jesus, even if you've been going to church for years, you haven't found the treasure yet. But it's there. It's there. There's a treasure in this world that will cause you, when you discover, to see everything else as secondary. It will change your life. You've just got to find it. And if that's you, if you suspect, reading the reaction of these men in the parable, that this is not your reaction and maybe you have not yet found the treasure, well then, I encourage you to come back to church, but come especially to a course we run called Discover Jesus. It's going to start again in a short time and you can find it on the Connect app.

But it's a course that is designed to help you to discover the treasure. That's what it's about. To discover these truths for yourself. Even if you think you know what they are. Even if you could tell me what the Bible says, but you may be realizing this morning you haven't found the treasure. Well, come to this course. Approach it with an open mind as if you're discovering it for the first time because you might find the treasure in these pages that you never knew was there. Will you come back and will you find this treasure? Let me pray for us.

[18 : 19] Lord Jesus, you came to reveal a treasure beyond any that this world can give. The kingdom of heaven.

The hope of life. Eternal life. And you rose, Lord, to show that this life is real. After dying a painful death to allow us to be part of this new life. Lord, so I pray for all of us here today.

I pray that none of us would let these truths of Easter pass us by, but that we would respond appropriately. And that we would make this treasure our own by putting other pursuits aside.

Lord, I pray for anyone still looking for the treasure. That they would come to discover Jesus. And that they would do that.

That they would really discover Jesus and the kingdom of heaven. And everything they've ever been looking for in him. That they will find what they're seeking. Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name.

[19 : 30] Amen. Amen. I'm going to invite you now to pray a prayer with me. It's called the Collect for Easter Sunday. And so will you join as we pray this together. Almighty God, we praise and bless you because you have conquered death through your dearly beloved son, Jesus Christ.

And opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Forgive us for our sins and our past rebellion against your rule.

Inspire our minds and control our actions that we may please you from this day forward, both in thought and work.

For the sake of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Amen.