

The Hidden Treasure

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everybody. It's a long time since I've been here, and it's a great joy to be back again. It always brings back such happy memories for me to be at St. Mark's, because when I was a young man, I was the first student pastor here ever at St. Mark's, and used to come here on my scooter and run the youth and the children's meetings and run the services, and other people would preach.

I was under the tutorship of Bishop Desmond Douglas, who many of you will not remember. He's gone to heaven a long time ago. But St. Mark's has got that place in my memory.

You know, it's like having your first girlfriend or your first boyfriend. And so I'm very happy to be back again, and thank you for the invitation. I want to speak to you today about the mysteries of God, especially the mystery of the kingdom of God.

You know, the kingdom of God in the Bible is often described as a mystery, the mysteries of the kingdom of God. And the reason why it is is because it's not easy to explain the workings of God. God is far above us, and he's far bigger than us and far greater than we can even begin to imagine. You know, God controls the whole world, the heavens and the earth, and we can't even begin to imagine what that means.

[1 : 19] But he doesn't only control the heavens and the earth. God controls also the unseen things, the spiritual world. He controls all the angels, all the devils, all the demons.

He controls everything that happens in the world of spiritual activity. And likewise, God controls the spiritual kingdom that came into our world when the Lord Jesus came into our world as a baby and then grew up and then went to the cross, and he died on the cross for us.

Now, I just want to pause there for a moment before I continue and say that if you ever think or talk of the Lord Jesus without thinking about his cross, you're taking a step away from him.

You must never think of Jesus without thinking about the cross. The cross was the great cosmic event of all time that enables everything that is going to happen in the future to happen.

Nothing would happen. No person would become a Christian. There'd be no second coming, no heaven for us to go to at all if it wasn't for what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross by shedding his blood and dying for us and paying an atonement for us and making it possible for us to be reconciled to God again.

[2 : 35] However, all these things can be great mysteries to many people, and many people that you know probably don't understand it when you talk to them about it, and perhaps there was a time when you never understood it either, and maybe even as you sit here, you don't understand it all fully.

You don't get it all. The penny hasn't dropped completely for you, maybe. So I want to say to you that it's a great mystery. God is a mysterious person in many ways, and he has made himself known to us only through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we don't know everything there is to know about God. We only know what is necessary for us to know to live in this world and to be saved and to go to the next world. That's all we know.

We don't know anything more about God at all. Now, let me pause for a moment. I'm going to now tell you a story, and it's a true story. It's a missionary story, and the reason why I'm telling it to you is because I want to illustrate to you the greatness of the mystery of God and his purposes in the world, and then I want to talk to you about the lost treasure that we read about a moment ago.

In 1924, there were two people, husband and wife by the name of David, and Sevilla Flood. They were actually from Sweden, and they were called by God as missionaries, and they went to the Belgian Congo as it was known in those days.

[4 : 03] There was another couple that went with them called the Ericssons. All this is true. I have the documentation in my car outside. I've just left it there by mistake this morning, and the central office, the central compound of missionaries in the Belgian Congo met with them and sent them to an unreached tribe in the jungles of the Congo at that time, and asked them to see if they could take the gospel to this tribe.

When they arrived there, they were astonished to discover that the chief of the tribe was very antagonistic toward them, and he wouldn't allow them into the village, he said, because they were antagonized their own gods, and so they were not allowed to speak to the villagers, and they were not allowed in the village at all.

Well, these two couples didn't know what to do, so they went up the hillside, and there they built their own little compound made of mud, and there they lived for several years, not being allowed to speak to a single person in the village at all.

The chief, however, did allow a little boy once a week or twice a week to bring chicken or eggs up to the missionaries to sell it to them so that they could exist, and so it went on year after year, and they were absolutely driven mad by malaria and attacks of mosquitoes and things of that nature.

So eventually the one couple, the Eriksons, gave up and went back to their headquarters and said, appoint us somewhere else, but the other two stayed on, and the wife said to herself, well, if we're not allowed to reach the people in the village, then we'll talk to this little boy who brings the chicken and the eggs to us, which she did, and she led him to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 53] However, the bad feelings between the chief and the tribe and the missionaries continued, and to everyone's amazement, this young missionary's wife became pregnant, and the chief of the tribe did allow the local tribal midwife to go and help her to give birth, and she gave birth to a little girl, but she had been so ravaged by malaria that 17 days later she died.

Now when she died, something happened to her husband. He just snapped inside, and he said, God does not love us. He does not care for us.

We thought he loved us. We thought he cared for us, but he does not, and so he buried his wife on the hillside, and he took this newborn girl back to the headquarters, and he gave her to a missionary, a missionary American couple, and said, I cannot take care of her.

God has got no time for us. God has rejected us. God does not love us, and I am going back home, and he gave the baby into the hands of the American couple, and he went back home.

Well, the Americans grew to love this child so much that when they went home on furlough, they took her with him. Then they discovered that they couldn't come back with her because of visa problems, because she was born in the Belgian Congo, and they were scared that she would be taken away, and all that sort of thing.

[7 : 24] So they decided instead to become pastors, and they did become pastors. The little girl grew up, and she married a fine Christian man who himself became a very effective pastor, and also the head of a big missionary organization, and they moved to a certain place in America where they were surrounded by American Scandinavian neighbors, immigrants who had come there, and one day, without knowing who it was, somebody put a leaflet into a magazine into her letterbox, which was a magazine which was reporting on mission work in the Belgian Congo.

And so she picked it up. She couldn't speak the language anymore, of course. She never grew up there, but she knew that her mother and father had given their lives there, as it were. Her father had now disappeared, and the rumor was that he'd taken to drink, and he was a complete wreck.

And so she opened the magazine, and to her absolute astonishment, she saw a photograph of her mother's grave. And there, the tribe's people had put a gravestone on there and some words on it, and she was astonished by it, and she didn't quite know why or what had happened.

So she contacted the relevant authorities, and they told her, that little boy that your mother led to the Lord grew up, and he led every single person in that tribe to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He led every single person, and there were 600 people in that tribe. By the time the magazine article appeared, that village had grown in its influence so that there was a little denomination of 120,000 people in the Belgian Congo because of that little boy who was now a man.

[9 : 15] Well, you can imagine that severe flood, that young flood girl who had grown up under new names and so on, was astonished by all of this.

And so just a little while later, she went to a missionary conference, and it was a big convention, and there was this band from Africa, and he was speaking about work in the Belgian Congo.

And she went to him, and she said afterwards, do you know who severe flood is? That was her mother. And he broke into a great smile. He said, you must be her daughter. Severe flood has become the greatest hero to my people. They revere her, and they tend her grave, and they recognize that she was God's servant to them so that they could come to Christ. And you can imagine the shock in this woman's life. And he said to her, you must come and visit. And so there came a time when she was able to go to visit, and she and her husband went and visited this crowd of people to discover everybody rejoicing.

[10 : 23] When she arrived, everybody lined the roads, including the old chief who had become a Christian. And they all applauded her, and they fated her, and then they took her to her mother's grave where she knelt in prayer and thanked God for what had happened.

Now this is a true story. It's not a made-up story, and it is recorded. And I'm telling you the story because I want to point out to you how mysterious God is in the way he works. So for anybody thinking about the story, there are lots of mysteries and why did God call David in severe flood to go to this village only to be rejected?

Why the rejection? Why was there no sense of kindness on the part of the villagers to them, except to send them, the little boy to sell chicken and eggs to them?

Why was there no acceptance? And why is it that this man had to suffer such a long time with his wife, with malaria and sicknesses, and then unexpectedly this little baby comes along which only complicates things for them?

Why did all this happen? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why did the mother die? What was the mystery on that? Why must that be added to all the difficulties and the sorrows of everything that happened to him?

[11 : 46] And then finally, his daughter gets adopted by an American couple. Why does he feel the impulse to give her away? And he himself goes into a spiritual oblivion.

On the way to visit the African people, this young girl found her father in Sweden and he was a drunk. And she found him lying in a derelict flat with bottles surrounding him.

And she sat for some days with him and stroked his cheek because he was dying. And finally, his heart broke and he sobbed and he repented for walking away from God.

And he said to her, I never ever meant to give you away. I was just so heartbroken and angry I didn't know what to do. And he came back to the Lord Jesus and he was saved.

And so she went from there to see her African brethren in the Congo. All of this is such a mix-up and a jumble of mysterious circumstances.

[12 : 45] And yet, out of it all comes this massive crowd of people who have given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you see why it's difficult when we talk about the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God is the kingdom that God rules. That's why it's called a kingdom. Because God is the king who rules what happens in the world. So he not only rules what happens in space, he not only rules what happens in the ocean, but he rules over all of the unseen things that we can't see and he also rules over things like what happens in the church.

He rules over our lives, he rules over the things that happen in our ministry for him. He rules over all of these things. Things that we don't know are going to happen, he rules over it all.

And the seed of the gospel never goes to waste. You know, there's a little parable in Mark's gospel that says that the farmer sows his seed and then he goes to sleep. And while he's sleeping underground, the seed is coming alive.

And then eventually the seed grows up and he's able to take an ear of corn from it. And so, all of these things are great mysteries and we don't always know how God is working.

[14 : 00] We should never be discouraged when our loved ones don't accept the word we give them or when our own lives take turns that are heart-breaking and difficult to cope with.

We should never give up hope God is working in his kingdom. He's working to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and he will glorify Christ in the life of every person who names his name and he says, I'm a Christian.

But the way in which God glorifies his life is a very great mystery to us all. He does things that we don't expect at all. So here's something unexpected in Matthew chapter 13.

And in Matthew chapter 13 we have another illustration of how mysterious the kingdom of God really is. And so it says the kingdom of God is like treasure hidden in a field.

Now the Lord Jesus is speaking and of course the treasure of the kingdom of God is Jesus himself. There's no greater treasure than Jesus himself.

[15:06] What is the name of that man who led that Wagner group against the Russians? The name is Yengevny Prasokov or something like that, right? You can't even pronounce it so you can forgive me if I'm pronouncing it properly.

Well, you know, when his coup against the Russians finally failed and they raided his mansion in St. Petersburg, what did they find there amongst the many treasures and the valuable things? They found a bar of gold in the shape of a loaf of bread. Now you see, people like that and many other people think that all of life is made up of material things.

But it's not made up of material things. Those are the treasures that they put a value on. And of course some of us will know as we sit here today that for goodness sake we need some of that treasure to pay our rent and to pay our rates and to help with the kids schooling and all that sort of stuff.

But that is not the treasure that the Bible talks about. So when the Lord Jesus Christ says that the kingdom of heaven is like, what's it like? It is like a treasure hidden in a field.

[16:19] And the treasure, of course, we know from the Gospels is Jesus himself. He is the great treasure that God sent into this world. So the kingdom of God is like a treasure.

Now let me just list for you certain points very quickly that describe something about some points about the treasures that God gives us that this man finds in the field.

Alright? First of all, the treasure that God is speaking about that the man found in the field. The man found in the field a treasure that was made up of money and gold and ordinary things that you'd find in a pirate's treasure chest.

That's what he found in the field. In those days it was quite common to bury your precious items in fields. That's why in the parable the Lord Jesus Christ told of the men who were given the different talents.

Do you remember? One man was given five talents and one man was given two talents and one man was given one talent and the master went away and their talents were money and they were told to invest it for him.

[17:28] And when he came back he said, what did you do with my money? And the man with five talents said, I've invested it and he has five talents more. And the man with two talents said, I've invested it and he has two talents more.

But the man with one talent said, I buried it. See, he didn't do anything with it. Now there are lots of people who buried treasures in fields in those days and often times of war when people looted villages they buried their loot in fields.

So it wasn't an uncommon thing for somebody to find something valuable in a field. And so when the Lord Jesus Christ says that the kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field his hearers would have known exactly what he was talking about.

But although they would have thought about ordinary earthly treasure like a gold bar perhaps made into a loaf of bread that is not the treasure that the Lord Jesus Christ was speaking about.

He was speaking about himself. he is the treasure and what he has got to bring us is the real treasure that comes from heaven. So it's not like the treasure that we dream about.

[18:36] No, no. What the Lord Jesus Christ was referring to in this parable was something far, far greater and better than we can ever dream about in material terms. But the kingdom of God is like this.

The kingdom of God is like a treasure. That's what Jesus said. What did he mean by that? The kingdom of God is like a treasure. The second thing I want to point out to you is this.

Is that the treasures that we desperately need are not things that we normally think about. The treasures that we need are things like to be reconciled to almighty God.

That's what we need. We are not born into this world knowing God. We are not born into this world good enough for God. And we're not born into this world good.

We may not be as bad as others but we're not good in terms of how God defines goodness. So we are born into this world as needy people.

[19:37] We are born into this world as people who are spiritually poverty stricken. We need a reconciliation with God. That's part of the treasure that we need to find in this world.

We need forgiveness forgiveness. Because many of us have done things and said things that we are ashamed to think about. And if an angel of heaven had to appear and call you out of the audience and stand your ear and say I'm now going to repeat all the things that you've done wrong in your life and all the wrong thoughts and all the wrong words that you've spoken and all the shouting and the screaming that you've taken part in.

I'm going to repeat it to this congregation. You would die of shame and I would die of shame if that had to happen. Why? Because we need forgiveness. We need to be forgiven for what we've done against God and against each other.

We need to be forgiven for being sinners against God. And so the treasure that Jesus is speaking about is the treasure of reconciliation with God, the treasure of forgiveness, the treasure of being able to repent and to say sorry to Almighty God, the treasure of the inner change that comes to us, that turns us into different people and then the treasure that gives us the great gift of eternal hope. Those are the treasures that we need and that's what the Lord Jesus Christ was talking about and illustrating when he said a man walked into a field and there he found a treasure buried in the field. [21 : 09] And so this is the treasure that Jesus Christ is ultimately pointing to. He doesn't put it in that way, he puts it in parable form, he puts it in a way in which it illustrates it for us so we can understand it.

The Lord Jesus Christ doesn't go around giving pirates chests of gold away to everybody like the prosperity teachers tell you. No, no, the Lord Jesus Christ has got a treasure that is far greater than anything you could ever find in your purse or your bank account.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ has come into this world as God's great treasure to us and he gives us the great treasure of being reconciled to God and forgiven and being changed in the hope of eternal life.

Now we're not born like that, we're not born with those things, we're not born with those possessions or those privileges, that has got to come to us. We are born poor and needy and we do not see our need of those things.

then the next thing I want to point out to you is this, that Jesus tells us that the treasure is hidden. He says, the Lord Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field.

[22 : 26] Just like the marauding armies would hide their loot in a field or a thief would hide his ill-gotten gains in a field or a wealthy man would hide his treasure in a field, so the treasure from heaven is hidden in a field.

It's only a way of saying that we can't actually just reach out and touch it. We can't just reach out and take it. It's there, that is what we need, it's available to all but we can't just reach out and take it. It's like a treasure hidden in a field. And why does Jesus put it like that? Because for many people the treasure of heaven, the treasure that is in the field, the treasure I've spoken about, the treasure of being reconciled to God and being forgiven is not obvious to everyone.

Not everybody understands it, do you see? We don't all have ears to hear. We can listen to the preacher without hearing him.

Do you see? We can listen to the gospel without hearing it. and so we don't have ears to hear and we don't have eyes to see the truth.

[23 : 43] We don't have a heart to believe and so the treasure is hidden from us and it's a treasure that is hidden until it is revealed to us.

So maybe the man walking through the field just speculating now maybe kicks against something and he discovers a box or a bag and in it all this treasure. You are walking through life you don't know anything about this treasure but you meet an old friend from school that you haven't seen for 20 years and you discover he's become a Christian and he's talking to you about God and you saying but I don't remember you being like this and what's happening to you is you're kicking up against the treasure.

You see? Or you pick up a book or you come to a church service that somebody persuades you to come to a cattle service at Christmas time or something and suddenly you discover something you haven't thought of before.

What's happening? You're like a man walking through the field kicking against the treasure. You're suddenly finding the treasure is there. There's something there you haven't thought was there before.

Which brings me to the next point I want to mention and it's this. The treasure is hidden and it is now discovered accidentally. The treasure is hidden and it's discovered accidentally.

[25 : 00] It's not like you are around there looking for the treasure. It's not like you grow up once you've been born saying okay show me where to find the treasure. The treasure have been reconciled to God show me how to find it.

No you're not even interested. I'm not even interested. We aren't born interested like that at all. And so Jesus puts it in this way the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

It's hidden in a field and you will not see it. and if you do see it it will be by accident. You will bump into it.

And there are many people perhaps sitting in this church today who bumped into the gospel accidentally if I can put it that way. Now of course we know from other parts of the scripture that nothing happens accidentally.

That the God who rules the universe also rules over you walking through the field of the world and bumping your feet against the treasure. We know that God rules that too. But from our point of view Jesus is telling this parable as if so that people who were listening to him could understand and Jesus is saying you bumped into the treasure.

[26 : 13] Of course we know that the great God of heaven and earth is behind that bumping but from your point of view you bumped into it. You bumped into a friend or church service or a book or something or maybe just your life took a turn and you went to sit in your morbidity and your depression and said I cannot live like this anymore and so you began to search and look for something that was better and in that way you bumped into the treasure.

And so the treasure is hidden and it's discovered mostly accidentally by us all. I didn't know anything about the treasure when I was born into this world and I heard about it from a schoolmaster when I was at Weinberg Boys High School when I was in standards seven and eight I heard as it was then it's grades now of course but in those days standards seven and eight and I heard about the gospel from one of my teachers.

I never knew about it before never heard about that before and in that way I accidentally bumped into the treasure in the field and then I want to say to you that when you find the treasure it changes you because this is what Jesus said he says when a man found it he hid it again listen to this he hid it again and then in his joy he went and sold all he had and bought the field.

What does Jesus mean by that? Well he was saying something that the people that were listening to him would understand completely because the field may not belong to you you see you walked across the field you don't know the field belongs to and the owner may come and say that's my treasure he found it in my field but there were such complicated laws about finding treasures on fields because people did it quite often in those days and one of the laws was that if you bought the field you could keep the treasure so he covers the treasure over again he's filled with joy and he goes and spends all he's got to obtain that field so he can get the treasure now Jesus is not talking about the methodology of getting the treasure he's not talking about being dishonest by going to buy the field without the owner knowing that is not his point his point is that once you find the treasure you change once you find the treasure you want it at all costs once you find the Lord Jesus Christ you want nothing else you want him you want more of him once you find him your life is transformed and you're filled with a joy that you cannot explain now I want to tell you that there's a big difference between joy and happiness see your children can make you happy and your husband or wife can make you happy if they're so disposed or your anything your friends can make you happy you know you can win the lotto or something happiness is nothing happiness comes from the root perhaps you know by happening by you know something happening you can be happy that's not what the Bible offers you that's not what Jesus offers you he offers you joy what is joy goes beyond happiness you can still be depressed and have joy you can still have trouble and have joy you can still be disappointed and have joy you can still feel betrayed and have joy you can still be struggling financially and have joy because joy is that rooted sense that you are being held by someone greater than yourself and you can't get away from it you can't get away from it you're being held by somebody greater than yourself and so I want to say to you that the Lord

[30 : 17] Jesus Christ is the greatest treasure in all the world and although you may know quite a bit about him if you do not know him then you will go through all of your church life and your you can go to the grave knowing a lot about Jesus even more more than your minister does but you will go to your grave a lost person unless you know him personally I want him to be my savior I'm not worried about the church and the m's and all the rest of it you can see what image you like and all that sort of stuff but Lord Jesus are you here with these people I want you to fill my heart with your

presence and Lord Jesus when I think of you what do I think of I think of the cross and what you did there for me on the cross no one has done that for me on the cross so you go through all the religions in the world and ask yourself this question did the founder of that religion ever die for his people and the answer is no the only founder of any religion who ever died for his people was the Lord Jesus Christ and he rose again from the dead so that he could share life with those who follow him and so a man walks through a field and he discovers a treasure and maybe you've come to church today and you've bumped into the treasure maybe you've known about it but you haven't actually known it maybe you've heard about it but you haven't actually received it maybe maybe you like coming to church because it's part of your cultural thing that you do but you haven't actually embraced the treasure himself not itself himself he's the treasure and when you do you will discover that you are lifted up to planes you would never have thought of you will be given hope that you never dreamt that you'll have and a peace of heart and mind that only Jesus can give you because sins will be forgiven and your hand will be put back again into the hand of almighty God so there it is the kingdom of heaven is like like what it's like a treasure what treasure oh it's hidden in a field can I go and look for it no you will you just bump into it and today if you're bumping into the treasure then this very morning you should not leave this church until you say Lord Jesus I want you as my treasure my saviour to reconcile me to God forever and I'll be around to talk to you if you want to talk to me I'm going to stay around in the front here if you don't mind and not go to the back and I'll be so glad to meet you and talk to you and tell you tell me whether you think you have found the treasure this morning and now will you bow with me in prayer heavenly father thank you so much for all you have done for us but above all for giving us your son our Lord Jesus Christ the heartbeat of heaven the treasure above all treasures and here we are and we pray that you will help us to embrace him today for Jesus sake amen