

“THE PARABLE OF THE PRICELESS TREASURE.”

First Christian Reformed Church

June 2, 2013, 10:30AM

Scripture Texts: Matthew 13:44-46

Introduction.

Several of you have expressed concern to us over our many friends living in the OKC area. None have been directly impacted, though some of their families and friends have been. But they do confess to growing weary of the relentless storms. One friend posted on Facebook, “My frays are nerved.”

Some of you have seen that YouTube video of the Moore, OK father who crawled out of the storm shelter, surveyed the destruction, saw his home completely destroyed and said, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away.”

What a godly husband and father, what an example he set for his family and what wisdom he taught them.

Can you imagine losing everything, having everything taken away? Our earthly blessings and privileges and pleasures that we enjoy in this life seem so big and real and important to us, it’s hard to imagine life without them.

Satan tries to make the pleasures of this world seem so great and such a big deal to us. He tries so hard to keep our desires so small, to keep us so distracted by trinkets and cheap dime store toys that we will pay no attention to the glories of God and His will and His ways and heaven and eternal life with Him.

What does Jesus have to say or do to get us to change our opinions or views? Does He have to take away our health? Does He have to take away our loved ones? Does He have to make us old and tired and weak and weary before we start to think that maybe this old world isn’t all that it’s cracked up to be and not all that worth hanging on to?

Why does He have to do all that to convince us that the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life are so fantastic that nothing here, even the best possible life here is, is better by comparison?

The Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven is not just a place, it’s a reign or a rule. The Kingdom of Heaven is being established and built when demons and devils are being cast out, when the old man is being put off and the new man is being put on, when the works of the flesh are being resisted and hated and the fruit of the Spirit is being embraced and pursued, when unbelief and unrighteousness are being replaced by belief and righteousness.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

When Christ rules and reigns in my heart and in my life that’s the Kingdom of Heaven being established. While this reign and rule are being established in our hearts as we are being sanctified by Christ, His reign and rule are not complete or perfectly established until we get into the Kingdom in heaven. It starts in the heart and ends in heaven.

Matthew 13:44-46.

Matthew 13:44-46 “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.
45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

A certain man while doing his own thing and minding his own business, preoccupied with worldly affairs and concerns, falls victim to something quite unexpected, something totally out of the ordinary, something outside of himself. By the grace of God he sees it and seizes the opportunity. Another man in search of this treasure finds it and responds the same way.

In these stories there are three things to notice.

First, the experience changes everything. It changes his values, it changes his priorities, it changes his perspective. It's a total paradigm shift, a radical reorientation of his life and his life's purpose.

This is a life-changing, life-defining story of total transformation.

He takes the risk of faith. He lets go of everything he had, everything he had accumulated, everything he had earned, everything that defined his existence up to that point and gave it up, for something of greater worth.

The grace of God in Jesus Christ is only received by those who are willing to empty themselves of everything else. This is a picture of a true conversion, and it's not just a singular moment. The radically decisive moment to follow Jesus comes each day, daily dying to self and dying to worldly values and pursuits and being transformed by grace to live for Christ.

Second, notice a very key element in this story. What motivated him to do what he did? Was he motivated by guilt, by shame, by pressure, by fear? No, he was motivated by joy. Don't miss this. The secret to kingdom living and giving is joy. If we miss ***“in his joy”*** we miss everything.

In an incredible economy of words Jesus sets before us the goal of life, a radical joy found in a radical act of sacrifice and commitment. In just a few words He sets before us what we all want more than anything. G.K. Chesterton once said “the serious business of heaven is joy” and that joy begins here, since the Kingdom of Heaven starts here.

Finally, notice what happens once the treasure is discovered, it captures his imagination, it becomes the focus of all his thinking, he thinks about it every waking moment and even dreams about it. He became passionate about something, maybe for the first time in his life. He found something that he really cared about, something outside of him, bigger than him.

Does this suggest that we should possess nothing, no tangible worldly possessions?

People always want to know if this means that they have to renounce all material possessions in order to gain eternal life and enjoy heaven.

The simple meaning of these parables is that we do have to consider the treasure of Christ and the Gospel and His rule and reign better than and more desirable than all the riches, delights and comforts of this life.

Is your eternal salvation more valuable to you than your spouse and children and grandchildren and bank accounts and jobs and hobbies and vacations?

Is having Christ as your Lord and Savior more valuable to you than your favorite sins, your old habits, your old prejudices, judgments, and former way of thinking, acting, speaking? Maybe even some of your old friends?

This kind of joy means selling out, surrendering, repenting, renouncing. It's seeing all that we have and are for what it really is, just junk headed for the landfill, just glory-stealing, God-robbing sin.

There is nothing like a tornado or an earthquake or a tsunami to show that all our stuff here on earth is just a pile of kindling for a really big fire someday. Everything we work and strive so hard to accumulate can be reduced to a pile of rubble in a matter of minutes. We are foolish to give it too big a place in our hearts. Some of us need a mental tornado to unhook from stuff.

Like that point in the wedding when we finally say, "I renounce all others, I forsake every other person, I give up any relationship that might have a hold on me or an attraction to me."

The true Christian is like Paul, who says:

Philippians 3:7-8 Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 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

Christ is the giver of every good and perfect gift. All that we have is grace. Christ permits us to use His many blessings, but to not be owned by them. Money in the wallet is a good thing, money in the heart is an eternally dangerous thing.

"Where you treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

Each man found something of very great value, something perhaps that he had longed for and only dreamed of. He found a treasure of huge proportions. What's amazing is that when he sold everything, he had enough to buy it. Do you ever think that what you really want in life is out there beyond your grasp, beyond your means, always elusive?

With God, what you want is not beyond your reach. It will take everything that you have but not more than you have. It's possible by God's grace to have the greatest treasure there is, all it takes is all of you and all you have.

The Point.

The point of these two parables is that it's only by the grace of God can we even find a treasure that's buried or a fine pearl among many pearls. And only by the grace of God will we set aside every earthly possession and every earthly desire for the joy of a heavenly treasure.

There are some people who completely misunderstand the Reformed doctrine of predestination, they think that it means that some people who really would like to be Christians won't be because God hadn't elected them. And that there will be other people who really don't want to be Christians but they are dragged kicking and screaming into heaven because God elected them.

These parables show us a different picture. One man wasn't looking for the treasure but when he found it he knew in his heart of hearts that it was a really good thing and he wanted it and knew it was worth any price. The other man was looking, searching, seeking and when he saw it he knew it and he wanted it with all his heart.

God's grace was at work preparing both souls so that when they saw it they were willing to do whatever was necessary to gain this treasure, they would stop at nothing, even selling everything.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Application and conclusion.

These are very simple stories that Jesus told. He doesn't expand the stories to include any internal discussion the men might have had with themselves. "Is it really worth it? If I sell everything what will my family or friends say? What will this do to my plans or priorities or lifestyle? Is it really worth the trouble?"

Do you want God as your treasure more than anything else? Do you want God to be the supreme desire of your heart, to rule and reign? Do you? Think about that. If yes, then is there anything in your life right now that reflects that desire? If no why not, why are you holding back? What do you fear? What don't you trust about God?

Why don't more people sell out and go for God? Why isn't this happening all the time all around us?

Why are people so sold out to other gods, to materialism and money, to success and the pursuit of pleasure? Why are such small gods such hot commodities these days? Why do people have such a hard time letting go of their little gods for the one true God?

Might it be possible that part of the blame rests on us Christians? America worships money and things because that's the biggest and best god they have seen. They haven't seen a god big enough and worthy enough to give up their false idols. Now that's a hard thought to swallow.

They haven't seen Christians who have given up everything in total dependence on God. They haven't seen Christians showing that God, not money, is their treasure, their joy and their security. They haven't seen Christians joyfully giving generously without thought to themselves. They haven't seen radical joy in a radical commitment. Our God is too small.

Both men in the parable knew that even at the cost of everything they were coming out way ahead. In fact the selling of everything really wasn't a sacrifice at all.

He who has Christ is never poor, he has the richest inheritance on any human being who has ever lived.

As we ordain new officers, I am more aware of our need for spiritual leaders in our lives to show us the way, how to live and how to let Christ rule and reign in our lives. We need spiritual leaders who are living that way. And we need spiritual leaders who encourage and challenge us to live that way.

We need spiritual leaders whose love for God and God's ways is increasingly becoming all-consuming, leaders who are examining their own lives and their own hearts and their own attitudes even as they call us to do the same.

We need shepherds among us who can speak to us as Jesus spoke:

Luke 12:32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

It's God's joy to give you an inheritance in His kingdom and He is preparing us for it. It's your joy to receive it despite any temporary discomfort in his life.

And if His Kingdom is the source of our greatest joy and hope, then would not the spreading of that Kingdom to more people for their joy be a source of greater joy for us? What could be a better investment than any investment that advances and builds and establishes God's Kingdom rule and reign on earth?

I call us to joy. I call us to joyful living and joyful giving. I call us to so live in this life that not only will we have life in the world to come, but others would see our lives and believe that there is a God who is a treasure worth giving up anything and everything for.

Prayer: Jesus, for the joy set before you, you endured the cross. Saints of old suffered great losses all the while putting their hope in a heavenly city. Rule and reign in our hearts that your kingdom may be established on earth as it is in heaven and make us fit and ready for that great and glorious day. And while we remain may our joy increase and abound as you enlarge our vision of just how great a treasure you are.