

Matthew 13:44-46

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⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

⁴⁶ Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

COUNTING THE COST

A Costly Pursuit

Every year the slopes of Mount Everest are littered with the dead bodies of failed climbers.

The effort to climb the world's highest mountain is costly, all-consuming, and dangerous.

At Everest's highest point, you are breathing in a third of the amount of oxygen you would normally breathe due to the atmospheric pressure.

But it's not the lack of oxygen that kills. Avalanches are the foremost cause of death, followed by falls.

Winds on the mountain
have been recorded
at more than 200mph.

At least one person has died on Everest
every year since 1969,
except in 1977.

The safest year on Everest was 1993,
when 129 reached the summit
and eight died.
To put that in perspective,
1 out of every 16 people
who attempted the climb
died in the process.

The deadliest year for climbers of Everest
was 1996, when 15 died.
At that point an average
of 1 in 4 who attempted the climb
died before they reached the top.

Today, the odds are a little better.
Still, for every 8 climbers that reach the summit,
there is 1 who dies in the process.

Once you reach the summit,
The danger is not over yet.
Of those who stand on the world's highest peak,
only 1 in 10 survives the climb
back down the mountain.

More than 225 people have died
in the past three decades
trying to make the climb.

At least half of their bodies remain on the mountain
and will likely be entombed there forever.

April 2014 saw the deadliest day in the
mountain's history
when an avalanche swept
sixteen people to their deaths.

The bottom line is this:
If you want to see the view
from the world's highest peak
then you must understand
that it is a costly pursuit.
No man does this lightly.
You must be willing to lay down your life.

A Costly Kingdom

The terms kingdom of God,
kingdom of heaven,
and kingdom terms
that relate to the kingdom of God
appear nearly 150 times in Scripture.

So, what is the kingdom of heaven?
It is a reference to God's reign,
his authority to rule.
Where there is a kingdom,
there must be a king.
God is that king.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray,
in Matthew 6:10,
he instructed them to pray this way:
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

Indeed the kingdom of God is the place
where God's will is done,
fully and completely.

Jesus, in his ministry speaks of the kingdom
as something that has already come
but he also speaks of it
as something that has *not yet* come.

This is because the kingdom comes in stages.

First the kingdom came to earth in Jesus Christ.
The incarnation was the place
where heaven touched earth.

Then the kingdom came in power
in the upper room
on the day of Pentecost,
and the church became
the expansion of the kingdom of God.

First, the will of God was manifest
within the confines of one perfect life.
Then the will of God was manifest
in a multitude of people.

The church, drawn from
every nation, tongue and kindred,
has become the place
where the will of God is realized.

However, the Bible still refers to the kingdom
as a future tense realm
that will come only
with the return of Jesus Christ.

Then, and only then,
will the will of God
be fully realized
in the whole world.

However, our focus this afternoon is the church.
This is the kingdom of God
as it exists in this world,
right now.

This is the realm of those
who have been bought
with the blood of the lamb
and have been empowered
by the Holy Ghost.
This is the church.

To be a part of the kingdom
is the greatest opportunity
that this life has to offer.

There is nothing more fulfilling,
nothing that your heart longs for more
than a relationship with Jesus Christ.

However, as incredible as the kingdom is,
much like the summit of Mount Everest,
it is the price that keeps many
from ever committing to the kingdom.

Make no mistake,
This kingdom is a costly kingdom.
Jesus paid the price for our salvation.

The ransom for our souls was paid at Calvary.
However, that doesn't mean that salvation
Won't ever cost you anything.

No. You cannot earn your way into heaven.
But it costs something to follow Jesus.

I'm not talking about a price
that you pay to obtain salvation.
That's a price you could never pay.
It is a price that was paid
by the precious blood
of Heaven's only spotless lamb.

However, without doubt,
godliness and righteousness
will exact a price from you.

The cost of discipleship is very high.
True, the kingdom is available to us
only by grace through faith;
but genuine faith
means genuinely embracing
and yielding to God's reign,
not simply acknowledging it
and then passing it by
as if it did not exist.

The kingdom is a treasure,
and those who really believe in it
will sacrifice everything else in their lives
to obtain the treasure.

Now, Jesus often introduced
the everlasting truths of the kingdom
in the context of parables.

These kingdom parables
often begin with the words,
"The kingdom of heaven is like..."

This afternoon we are going to look
at a pair of relatively short parables
that appear in three consecutive verses
in Matthew 13.

In these parables
Jesus makes the point
that the kingdom of God is a treasure
that will cost you everything,
but that it is of such infinite value
that it is well worth the sacrifice!

Hidden Treasure

The first parable is so simple
That it is contained in a single verse:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Hiding treasures in a field
was more common in antiquity
than it is today.

People today put their money in banks,
or invest in stocks & bonds.
In Jesus' time there were no banks,
and there were no stocks and bonds.
There was no safe place
to store your treasure.

If an individual was fortunate enough
to amass a treasure, of any value,
it was up to them
to find a way to hide it from thieves
and preserve it until it was needed.

Many times the treasure
was placed in an earthen jar and buried.
This was particularly true in times of war
and political upheaval.

When news arrived of an approaching army
the wealthy would take
whatever jewelry or money they had
and bury it,
hoping to return and retrieve it
when the danger was over.

However, there were certainly many times
when the person who buried the treasure
never made it back
and the treasure was completely lost.

Indeed, archaeologists have often found
jars of gold coins
or even precious jewels and pearls
buried in a field.

When Jesus was introducing
the concept of the kingdom
to his disciples,
he told the story of a man
who, perhaps, is working
in another man's field.

Though the bible does not tell us
what, exactly, he was doing,
I like to envision the man as a sharecropper.
He is plowing a field,
that is the source of his livelihood,
but the field is not his.
It belongs to another man,
a wealthier man.

As he is plowing,
he unearths a buried treasure.
We are not told what the treasure is,
but the story certainly conveys the fact
that the treasure is immensely valuable.

So what does the man do?
Immediately he recognizes
that the field is not his
and if he tries to lay claim to the treasure,
the landowner will assert
his right of ownership,
and the treasure will be lost.

So, immediately, he puts it back where he found it.
He doesn't inventory it.
He doesn't spend a lot of time
estimating the value.

No. One glance, one moment,
was all it took.
He knows, almost intuitively,
that the treasure is of such value
that he must do whatever is necessary
to obtain it.

The only way to secure the treasure
was to purchase the field.
However, this is not a man of means,
he doesn't have any one thing
that has enough value
to exchange for the field.

As a matter of fact,
when he really begins to evaluate
the price of the field
he realizes that it will take
the sum total
of everything that he possesses
to purchase the field.

Jesus says that he sold all that he had
He liquidated everything
that he owned in this world
to buy the field
and obtain the treasure.

I want you to understand, this afternoon,
That ownership of the field
does not come easily.

It involved a total reordering of priorities,
a total re-evaluation of his life.
Everything must be focused
on the single goal
of owning the field
where the treasure is hidden.
Nothing less will do.

The point of the parable
is obviously the absolute value
of the kingdom,

it is worth surrendering everything
to gain entrance to the kingdom.

This parable is a statement
of the costliness of the kingdom,
a call for radical discipleship,
for abandoning everything
and taking up your cross
to follow Jesus.

That is the point of the parable:
The man found something so valuable
that he sold everything he owned
in order to get it.

That is powerful enough on its own.
However, Jesus goes a step further,
he says that it was with joy
that the man sold everything he had
to buy the field.

Think about that for a moment.
There are a lot of things in my life
that I could part with
that would not matter much,
but there are some things
That are precious to me.
It would hurt deeply to sell those things.

Everyone has those kind
of things in their lives.
They are not always things
of great financial value.
Sometimes they are simply things
that hold deep sentimental value.

Without a doubt, this man
that Jesus talked about
had some of those kinds of things in his life.

Perhaps some family heirloom.
Perhaps some childhood treasure.
Whatever it was,
He sold it.
With Joy,
He sold it.

Imagine the most valuable thing
that you possess
and imagine how hard it would be to sell it.

That's the point of this parable,
the kingdom is worth more
than the most valuable thing
that you possess,
indeed it is worth more
than everything that you possess, combined!

The man was so overjoyed,
so overwhelmed,
by the value of the treasure
that he was eager to surrender
everything that he had
in order to gain it.
With joy he sold all that he had.

The Pearl of Great Price

The second parable makes the same point in a different way:

⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:⁴⁶ Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

The Greek word for “merchant” is a reference to a wholesaler, the kind of man who would travel from city to city, searching through markets, fishing ports and trade fairs, looking for high-grade pearls to buy for resale.

Our modern equivalent might be those folks that search through old barns and attics, hoping to find among all the secondhand furniture an overlooked treasure that they can pick up at a bargain and sell for a profit.

This man is searching for someone that has a pearl of greater value than the price that they are asking for it. That’s how he makes his living.

Pearls were very valuable in the first century. They were as valuable as any precious gem. They were the diamonds of that age.

Their value was determined by their rarity.
They were hard to obtain.
Free divers would gather them
from dangerous depths
in the Red Sea,
the Persian Gulf,
and the Indian Ocean.

Pearl divers would literally tie rocks to their bodies,
take one long, deep breath,
and jump off the side of a boat,
and scour the bottom for oysters
in search of a pearl.

Many did not survive the endeavor.
But they did it anyway
because a single pearl
of perfect size and beauty
could be incredibly valuable.

Ancient reports tell of pearls
That were worth
what would be the equivalent of
tens of millions of dollars
in modern currency.

The merchant, in this story,
finds one of those pearls,
a pearl of great price.

Because he is a seeker of pearls,
he recognizes, immediately,
the value of the pearl
that he is looking at.
And, though the pearl was very costly,
he immediately determined
that it was more than worth the price.

Once again, we see a man
going and selling all that he has
to buy the treasure.

Unlike the itinerant farmer of the previous
story,
the merchant was probably a man of
means,
he had some things of value,
but the pearl was such an incredible treasure,
that the only way
that he could pay the price
was to sell everything that he owned.

If you know anything about investing,
you know that one of
the most important rules
is to diversify your holdings.

The common wisdom says,
don't put all your eggs
in one basket.

However, that is exactly
what these two parables tell us
we should do.

These men sold everything
and invested it all
in a single treasure,
a treasure that was likened
to the kingdom of God.

Truths About the Kingdom

Jesus told these two stories
because they teach several important truths
about the kingdom of God.

The first, and perhaps the most obvious
lesson to be learned here
is that the kingdom is worth that much.

If you are ever going to put
all of your eggs in one basket,
this is the basket
that you want to invest in.

The kingdom of God is valuable
beyond understanding.

Everything that this world
deems worthwhile or important
counts as nothing
compared to the exceeding value
of being a part of his church.

A relationship with Jesus Christ
is an eternal treasure
that is rich beyond comparison.

It is a treasure incorruptible
and undefiled
that will never fade away.

The kingdom of God is a heavenly treasure
buried in the field
of this poverty-stricken,
morally bankrupt,
broken world.

It is a the pearl of great price,
a prize that is exceedingly more valuable
than everything else in this world.
The kingdom of God is that valuable.
The church is that important!

Another lesson, that may not be as obvious,
is that the treasure of the kingdom
is not readily apparent.

The treasure was hidden in a field.
The pearl had to be sought after.

They weren't obvious to the casual observer.

Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The true value of the kingdom of God
is hidden from the carnal mind.

The worldly mind
that is preoccupied with
the things of this world,
never recognizes the value
of the kingdom of God.

It never really understands
Just how precious the treasure really is.

Another thing that these two parables teach us
is that, though the kingdom of God
is a community of believers,
it is a treasure that must be
personally appropriated.

The key figure in both parables is an individual.
An individual who discovers
a tremendous treasure
and determines to do
whatever is necessary
to obtain the treasure.

Both of these men
are willing to give up
everything in their lives
to obtain the treasure.
They must decide, for themselves,
that the treasure is worth the price.
So it is with the kingdom of God,
each person must purchase it
for himself or herself.

No one else can buy it for you.
You have to make up your mind,
for yourself,
that the treasure is worth the price.

The final lesson of these two parables
is that it doesn't matter how you find the treasure,
only that you do whatever is necessary to obtain it!

In the first parable,
The man just stumbled across the treasure.
He was merely doing something
that perhaps he did every day.
And while in the field,
going about his business,
He stumbled across a fortune.

In the second parable,
the merchant seeks the pearl,
knowing exactly what he's looking for.
He was searching specifically
for valuable pearls.

He knew what he was seeking.
He wanted something genuine,
Something real,
Something of lasting value.

These two men came to the kingdom
from different directions.
One was seeking it
and found that which he was seeking.
However, it took the other by surprise,
one day in an ordinary place
He discovered something extraordinary.

The key is not so much
how you discover the treasure.
The point of the stories
is the sacrifice that it takes
to obtain the treasure.
That's what really matters.

It doesn't matter how you came
to the knowledge of the kingdom,
it only matters what you do with it!

Both of these men considered the cost
and recognized that the value of the treasure
far outweighed everything else in the world.
Happily they sold everything
to obtain the treasure.

Make no mistake.
This is the point that Jesus was making.
This is what the Lord requires
of those who would become
a part of his kingdom.

Consider the cost.
Pay the price.
It takes total surrender
to obtain the treasure!

There is no such thing as a partial purchase.
You can't half way buy the treasure.
That's why it never works
to live with one foot in the church
and one foot in the world.

No. The treasure demands more than that.
It demands your all.
It demands that you sell everything else
and invest yourself,
fully and completely,
in his kingdom!

In many ways Jesus was telling his disciples
that embracing the kingdom of God
is a lot like gearing up to climb Mount Everest
you must be willing
to invest your whole life,
all of your living,
to the very point of death.

Mount Everest is an expensive expedition.
It costs anywhere from \$30,000 to \$120,000
just to make one attempt.

Training for the climb
takes eight to twelve months **full time**,
at the minimum.

Before one even considers
climbing that mountain
they must have several years
of climbing experience.

It is an expensive hobby.
And it is a dangerous pursuit.
But that doesn't stop the thrill seekers.

Think about it for a moment,
they risk everything to climb that mountain
with full knowledge
that 1 out of every 8 climbers
will die before they reach the summit.

Every climber considers the cost
and has to reach the conclusion,
for himself or herself
that the reward is worth the effort.

It is astonishing to me
how many people are willing
to risk everything they have
and even their own lives
to accomplish a feat
that offers them no tangible reward
beyond self-satisfaction and pride.
To me the price is too high.
But for them, the treasure
of standing on the top of the world
is worth everything.

That's the point that Jesus is making
about the kingdom of God.
It will cost you everything.
But it is worth the price.
It is far and away worth more
than the view from the highest mountain
in the world.

However, there are so many
who are simply not willing
to pay the price,
not willing to completely sell out,
not willing to lay down their lives,
in this world,
that they may obtain eternal life
in the next.

And that's the price that every person has to pay.
Both the poor farmer of the first story
and the well-to-do merchant of the second story
paid the same price for the treasure.
It cost them everything!

Jesus told his disciples:

Matthew 16:24-26

²⁴ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ²⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. ²⁶ For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Think about it!
What in the world is worth missing heaven for?
What in the world is more valuable
than the treasure hidden in the field?

Today, the kingdom is calling.
The treasure is still there,
buried in the field of your life.

The next move is yours.
Are you willing to pay the price?

Consider the cost this afternoon.
Because, it's going to cost you everything.
Make up your mind,
right here, right now,
heaven is worth more
than anything in this world.

CLOSING

As I come to a close this afternoon, let us reflect on the profound wisdom found in the words of Matthew 13:44-46.

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a treasure hidden in a field, and a pearl of great price. When discovered, the joyous finder sold all they had to possess it.

This is a call to each of us to consider the cost of discipleship, to recognize the immense value of our faith, and to be willing to give up everything to follow Christ. It's a reminder that the pursuit of the Kingdom of Heaven should be our top priority.

As we leave here today, let us carry this message in our hearts. Let us be willing to count the cost and to pay the price for the precious pearl that is the Kingdom of Heaven. May we find joy in the pursuit and satisfaction in the sacrifice, knowing that the reward far outweighs the cost.

These parables teach us about the immense value of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a treasure so precious that you should be willing to give up everything else to gain it.

As we come to this moment of decision, I want to ask you: Have you found this treasure? Have you discovered the pearl of great price? The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and it's worth more than anything else we could ever possess.

If you feel the Lord tugging at your heart, I invite you to turn your life over to Him. Make the decision today to sell everything you have, to give up your old life, and to gain the Kingdom of Heaven. It's a treasure worth everything. It's a pearl of great price.

Don't let this moment pass you by. The Kingdom of Heaven is within your reach. Give your heart to Him and claim the treasure that is waiting for you.