



Buried Treasure & Fine Pearls

Sermon – Matthew 13:44-46

Tony Swinton - 28 February 2021

I expect most of us would know the words of the Lord's prayer; you can find it in chapter 6 of Matthew's gospel. It's the way Jesus said we should pray and it starts like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come...

Jesus is teaching us to pray for the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, to come...

This morning we're going to look at three verses we find in Matthew chapter 13:44 – 46. Let me read them...

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and he bought it.

We see in the Lord's prayer we should pray for the Kingdom of Heaven to come and now in Matthew chapter 13 we are told that this Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure or a precious pearl that is so precious that it would be worth selling everything you have to gain it.

Now I'm not into pearls and have no experience with treasure or jewellery. There has been one outstanding exception - it was a magnificent gold necklace. If you could imagine the finest tiniest links of a handmade solid gold chain, put together into a V shaped chainmail necklace; it was stunning workmanship, breathtaking in its beauty.

\$250,000 and it would have been mine. At the time I could have sold my house and bought it. At the time \$250,000 was probably about three quarters of everything I had.

But I was not prepared to give up three quarters of everything I had to buy the necklace, as stunning as it was...

It makes me think...what would I treasure so much that would lead me to sell everything I have in order to buy it?

Let me ask you, what would you treasure so much that you would sell everything you own in order to buy it?

Jesus seems to be saying that the Kingdom of Heaven is so precious that it would be worth selling everything you have in order to gain it...

Well, what is the Kingdom of Heaven and where is the Kingdom of Heaven? I find this helpful... The kingdom is where the King rules. What is the Kingdom of Heaven...? It's where Jesus rules. Where is the Kingdom of Heaven...? It is where Jesus rules.

Now in 2021 the Kingdom of Heaven is a relationship where Jesus rules. After Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead, the kingdom of heaven will not just be a relationship, it will also be a permanent place, a place for those who live under Jesus' rule.

Let's explore this a bit differently... I've been taught that, in the Bible, God's kingship and his kingdom are different things.

God's kingship is seen in his creation; God created the world, everything in it, including us; it is his, he owns it. In creation we see the power of his kingship. His kingdom is a bit different.

His kingdom is what he is establishing by an outworking of his kingship now... When we pray your kingdom come, we are asking God to continue and complete what he has already begun...

So what is it he has begun? What is this Kingdom of Heaven? What is this treasure?

(Open the treasure chest and read what appears in bold at the end of this sermon text)

So, the first question for each of us, for me and for you, is... 'are you part of this kingdom of heaven?'

If you are not then Jesus says it would be worth selling everything you have in order to gain it, if that could gain it for you. If you are in the Kingdom of Heaven then treasure it; don't let other things distract you or take its place.

When we trust Jesus and let Jesus' concerns and claims override our concerns and wants, it is like gaining a treasure like no other... No demands put on you, no expectations from others or ambitions of your own should get in the way of you stepping into this relationship with Jesus now and into the future.

That's all a bit wordy so let's look at some examples from the Bible about how this might look...

Mark 1:16ff 'As Jesus walked beside the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake for they were fishermen. Come, follow me, Jesus said and I will make you fishers of men. At once they left their nets and followed him.'

Some might think there's a back story...maybe these guys have known Jesus for some time; maybe they have heard him speak many times? Maybe, but maybe there is no back story? We are not told.

Why? My guess is it is not important; what God wants us to know is just this...

'When Jesus said to them come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. At once they left their nets and followed him.'

The passage continues...

'When he'd gone a little further, he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John in the boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him'.

Now I'd like to suggest to you that for Simon and Andrew as well as James and John this is the point where we see them stepping into the kingdom of heaven; they just trust Jesus.

Remember...The Kingdom is where the King rules. King Jesus says come and follow me; they trust him and follow him. Simon and Andrew just walk away from their small business. It seems they just close the door and follow Jesus.

James and his brother, John, were working with their father; likely it's the father's small business with, possibly, family expectations that go with helping the old man run the family business. Jesus comes up to them and says, "Come and follow me." They leave their father with the hired men and follow Jesus. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure. When James and John find it, they put aside everything to gain it.

It seems their business ceased to be important compared to following Jesus. What their father or family may have wanted or expected does not seem to enter into their decision making; they just leave and follow Jesus...right then, right there.

Now there is a contra story in the Bible... You may remember the story of the rich young man in Mark 10. The rich young man is just finished telling Jesus that he had kept the commandments since he was a boy; this is where we pick up the story:

Ch10:21 'Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said, "go, sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." At this the man's face fell and he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and he said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God."

The rich young man's wealth was his treasure; it was of greater value to him than following Jesus. I would suggest to you, based on what we have read here in Mark 10, that he did not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In our culture we often value wealth, our business, gaining a good job with salary increases, the better market house, the good car. Many value the status these things bring; many have ambition... The question is, do these sorts of things stop you from doing what Jesus would have you do?

What about those with little in the way of material goods or money and with no particular ambition? What do you think about them? In Kingdom terms they may be better off.

Jesus seems to suggest that it's hard for those with much, or those with their own life plan to enter the kingdom of heaven.

In 1 Timothy 6:9 the apostle Paul writes:

'People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.'

There was a German Christian theologian and preacher by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was put to death by the Nazis.

His experience of his faith and of witnessing what was happening in Europe before and likely during the Second World War led him to write that ambition is the root of all evil.

These things can get in the way of Jesus' rule in your life. In Matthew 6:19 Jesus says, 'Where your treasure is, your heart will be also'.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure...a treasure hidden in the field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and he bought it.

What might that look like in somebody's life today? There are many examples; here is one suggestion...

It is about a young man of about 21, a mechanic and something of a hoon in his car. This young man (I will call him Pete) worked with his father in their automotive business. Pete used to help out with the youth group at his church; he was committed to the task, very regular, and did all that was expected of him in that role and more. He had been a Christian for a few years.

His father raced at Bathurst every year, probably the most celebrated car race in Australia. Pete's father asked if he would race with him at Bathurst! This is Pete, the mechanic, the car hoon! What 21-year-old mechanic would not jump at the chance to race at Bathurst?!

Pete came to have chat and said, "I can't do the youth group if I'm going to race at Bathurst because I'm going to have to train heaps. What should I do?"

He decided not to race at Bathurst and to keep up his role with the youth group. I believed then and I still believe now, that was a watershed moment in his faith. He left his own desire and ambition, and his father, for what he believed Jesus would have him do. In a way he became like James and John. He continued his role with the youth group for many years. He even found his wife there.

Both of them have continued in some sort of ministry in the same church since then. I bumped into him at a party probably about three years ago now. He runs the family business; it's a very lucrative business and provides for his parents, for Pete's family and all his siblings and their families.

Pete said he could retire but he wanted to help fund the Youth Minister at the local church so he kept working.

Last year I bumped into someone I know who had been an Assistant Minister at the church that Pete goes to. We were talking about Pete and I noted Pete mentioned that he keeps working to help support the youth ministry. The guy who had been the Assistant Minister at the church Pete goes to said, "No...Pete doesn't help support the youth ministry...he pays for the youth ministry!"

Pete also bought a house in the Blue Mountains so that people from his church have somewhere to stay when the different Katoomba conventions are on; it's also a place that other Christians can go for a rest at other times of the year at a cheap rate.

I suspect I know where his treasure is; I suspect it's in the saving grace and the rule of Jesus in his life.

Look around you for examples at Kiama Anglican and in other churches that you are aware of; look for those women and men whose treasure is in the saving grace and Lordship of Jesus.

Visa card, keys (car & house), land deed, super fund...the wrong treasure!

Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, your heart will be also..."

Where is your heart? That will be where your treasure is...

(This is what is in the treasure chest)

It is God restoring his people through the cross of Christ.

It is God through Jesus exercising his grace to fulfil his plan to save his people.

It's the grace of God being poured out through Jesus' death and resurrection onto us and others.

It's God bringing his people into relationship with him through Jesus, a relationship where you and I and others trust Jesus's rule over our lives.

This is the treasure of great value... But wait... there's more!

When we are praying, 'Your Kingdom come'...there's more to this precious pearl...

We are also asking for Jesus to return.

We are asking for judgement.

We are asking for that day when every knee shall bow.

That day when sin ends.

We are asking for that day when the kingdom of heaven is no longer just a relationship but a place where God's people live under Jesus' rule.