**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**Entering the Kingdom**
Scripture: Matthew 13:44-46
Code: 2303

The joy is ours, this morning, to return to our study of the parables of Matthew 13. And this morning we're going to be looking at two parables taught by our Lord, very brief and we can take them together. They touch the same subject. Matthew chapter 13 verses 44 through 46, Matthew 13:44 through 46.

"The Lord said again, 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which when a man hath found he hideth and for joy of it, goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man, seeking fine pearls who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.' "

Now, if we were to sum up the meaning of these two parables, we could sum them up under the title "The Incomparable Value of the Kingdom." The Incomparable Value of the Kingdom. The great old St. Thomas Guthrie once wrote on the value of the kingdom, or the value of salvation.

And he said this. "In the blood of Christ, to wash out sin's darkest stains, in the grace of God to purify the foulest heart, in peace to calm life's roughest storms, in hopes to cheer guilt's darkest hour, in a courage that defies death and descends calmly into the tomb, in that which makes the poorest rich, and without which the richest are poor indeed, the gospel has treasure greater far than east or west unfold and its rewards more precious are than all the stores of gold."

What he was saying was what our Lord is saying. There is nothing in all the universe to match the priceless value of the kingdom. And that's what we're going to see as we look together at these two parables. Now remember this. The Lord is teaching in this chapter in a series of parables, seven to be exact. And they are His way of describing the kingdom. Now God rules over the entire universe and God rules because it is in the universe over this earth.

At all points of this earth's existence, it is ruled by God. The form in which that rule works is distinct from time to time. God may be mediating His rule on earth through patriarchs. He may be mediating His rule on earth through prophets, or priests, or kings. He may be mediating His rule on earth through the presence of the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, as He did when He was here for those 33 years.

He may be mediating His rule on earth through the apostles, through the living church, as He does today. But it all points in the earth's history, God is ruling. And so we are now living in a form of the kingdom of God on the earth. It is called by the title, the Kingdom of Heaven, here in Matthew 13. And in this section, the Lord describes for us the character of God's rule on earth in this age, the time from the rejection of Christ to the return of Christ.

Now in this series of seven parables, we gain insight into this period of time. The first two parables tell us about the nature of the mystery form of the kingdom as it's called. This part of the kingdom being hidden from those generations past and now revealed to us. It has been a mystery revealed. And we, first of all, see that its nature is described in two parables.

The parable of the soils which tells us that in this kingdom there will be those who believe and there will be those who do not. So, this part of the kingdom has believers and non-believers. In the second parable of the wheat and the tares, we find that the believers and the nonbelievers will grow together until the harvest that comes in the end. So, the nature of the kingdom is that it encompasses good and evil. The evil are not truly members of the kingdom but they are enclosed within the rule of God, for He rules at this time in the world.

Now the second two parables…they come in couplets…the second two parables speak of the power of the kingdom. In spite of the fact that good and evil are growing together, the good will triumph in the end. And so we see that the good element of the kingdom in the evil world is, first of all, described as a mustard seed planted in the field, which ultimately grows to massive proportions so that though the kingdom began very small with just the Apostles, when Jesus comes to establish His kingdom it will fill the whole earth.

And then there was the parable of the leaven which said essentially the same thing. The leaven represents the kingdom, buried as it were in the dough of the world which, ultimately, will penetrate and permeate and influence the whole earth. And the parable of the leaven shows the internal permeating influence of the kingdom which touches every dimension of human life.

And so, we see, then, the nature of the kingdom and we see the power of the kingdom. But in those four parables, we note that we're looking at the kingdom in general. We're looking at it, as it were, from above and seeing how it operates and how it functions and we have said nothing about how it is personally appropriated. And so we would find the question arising at this point, well then, if the kingdom covers the earth and permeates the earth and influences the earth, do we just get born into the kingdom? Is it like being a Jew, you're just sort of born into the covenant people? Is that how it is? Do you just get born into the kingdom by belonging to parents who belong to the church?

And so, our Lord wants to talk then, in this third couplet of parables, about the appropriation of the kingdom, the nature of the kingdom, the power of the kingdom and the appropriation of the kingdom.

And these two parables, as do the previous two couplets of parables, speak to the same subject. Now, let's look, first of all, at the parables and then at the principles they teach; very simple outline, the parables and then the principles.

Now the parables…let's look first of all at verse 44. The first one is a parable of hidden treasure, very simple story. "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which when a man has found, he hides and for joy of it goes and sells all that he has and buys the field." Now this is very common parlance to the people in our Lord's time and not so common to us. We put our money in the savings and loan, or we put our money in the bank, or we put our money in stocks and bonds or securities or…or real estate or whatever, whatever. That is if we have any money to put anywhere.

But in those days there…they had no banks as such for common people, and banks weren't necessarily good places to put all of your resources. And so it was usual that men took whatever they considered of great value and they buried it in the earth. Particularly was this the case in Palestine because Palestine was a place of war. It was a battleground. Its history is literally filled with the record of one battle after another, one war after another.

And there were inevitably conquering peoples and those who came in to steal and to loot and to plunder. And so very often when a battle was on the horizon, the people would take the valuable things out of their home, take them out into the field and in a marked place where they could recover them again, they would bury them in the earth. Very commonly done. The earth was a veritable storage house.

And so here is a man who is in the field. And we don't know but that he works in the field or that he is, for some reason or another, in that field which belongs to another man, perhaps employed by the man who owns the field. And as he is working in that field, maybe he's plowing or maybe he's tilling the ground, or whatever, he comes across a treasure buried in the ground. And immediately he puts it back where he found it and sells every single thing he possesses in the world, liquidates all that he has and buys that field in order that he may gain that treasure.

Now it would not be uncommon for him to find something in the field. In Matthew chapter 25, our Lord tells a story about a man who gave talents to his servants. Remember that? And the first two servants took the five talents and the two talents and multiplied them, and the third one, who was very, very timid in his investment approach, buried it in the ground.

Now that tells us something about a man who was not wise. He should have invested it and gained interest, the Lord said. But it also tells us that that was commonly done by people who didn't want to invest their money but wanted to hang on to it. And so we see this man coming through the field. He finds a treasure, he puts it right back in the ground, goes and buys the field. This was very, very common.

Josephus said…the historian in that time…“The gold and the silver and the rest of that most precious furniture which the Jews had and which the owners treasured up underground was done to withstand the fortunes of war.” And so, this was a very, very common thing to do. And there would be people plowing in the field, or there would be people digging in the field for other purposes. And they would inadvertently come across this treasure from time to time.

Now at this juncture the parable introduces an ethical situation. People have said, “Look, this guy didn’t do right. How can you have Jesus telling a story in which there’s an unethical activity? How can you have Jesus telling a story in which a man does something that is wrong? I mean, the guy uncovers a treasure, and then he hides it without telling the man who owns the field, and he goes to buy the field. What he should have done in discovering the treasure was pick it up and take it and say, ‘Here’s a treasure I found in your field.’ ” And so some people have been struck by what appears to be unethical.

Well, let me help you with that, although that isn’t the main point. If we don’t get past that some people kind of choke on that and don’t get the rest of the message. First of all, Jewish Rabbinic law said, “If a man finds scattered fruit or money, it belongs to the finder.” Now that is what the law said. If you find lost fruit or money, it belongs to the finder. So the man is within the permission of the Jewish Rabbinic law. So the Jews listening to Jesus would not have perceived this man as unethical.

Secondly, that which was hidden in the field did not belong to the man who owned the field. If it was his, he wouldn’t be selling his field without digging it up. He didn’t know it was there. He had not gone to the effort to uncover it and dig it out. No doubt it belonged to a previous owner of that same field who had buried it there, died in battle, or died by accident, unable to recover it and so it was no more the number one’s owner than it was the number two’s owner. So he had no prior right to it. And the man who had uncover it…uncovered it by Jewish law did have the claim on it. The other man had not done that.

Now, thirdly, this man was very equitable; this man was very fair. If this man was not an honest man when he found the treasure what would he have done? I mean, he would have split. He would have packed up his treasure and been long gone, and put it in his own field. Why go to all the trouble of buying the entire field when you’ve got the treasure in your hand? You say, “Well, maybe his conscience bothered him. Or maybe it was his father-in-law or some relative.”

Well, I thought about that and then I thought…I thought of a good idea. This will show you how my mind works. You could take the treasure and go liquidate a portion of it, and with the money you gained from the treasure then buy the field. Not bad, huh? He didn’t do that. He took that treasure that he had found; he knew it belonged to him by Jewish law.

He knew he had more or at least equal right to it with the man who owned the land. He put it right back in the ground, never even used any of it for the purchase, liquidated every single thing he had on the face of the earth in his possession and went and bought the entire field just so that he could do what was right to get that treasure. No lack of ethics here. No one was defrauded.

Now, having said that, none of that is the point of the parable. That's just free for nothing. The point of the parable is here is a man who found something so valuable that he sold everything that he had to get it. That's the point of the parable. He was so overjoyed, he was so ecstatic that he was willing to do anything to get that treasure.

Now let's look at the second parable of the pearl. "The kingdom of heaven is also like a merchant man," and that is a wholesale merchant, *emporos* in the Greek, has to do with a wholesale man who would go around and buy things on a wholesale basis and then sell them to somebody who'd retail them. So this wholesaler's scouring around, seeking fine pearls. This is very common in those days for a man to do who was a sort of entrepreneur.

He would be in the pearl wholesaling business and he would find that there would be a diligent search on his part to gain the pearls that he was desiring to gain. Many people, in diversifying their investments, put their investments in pearls. Pearls would be the equivalent of diamonds today. Pearls were the most valuable gem available at that time in the world. And if you had pearls, you had a fortune.

It was incredible the extent to which people went in those days in pearl hunting. They would search in…particularly, in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. And there were pearls to be found there but they were to be found at great price and many people died gaining them. They actually were unable to use any what…what we would know as modern paraphernalia to do the pearl diving.

Basically, what they did was tie rocks to their body and then jump off the side of the little boat and go to the bottom amidst all the monsters of the deep that they would know little about, and the sharks and whatever else, and they would scour the bottom in the mud trying to come up with those oysters, holding one long deep-drawn breath, and fearing lest they go too deep and burst and die. And they would come up with these treasures.

And when once discovered, a pearl that was of perfection and beauty would be worth literally an unnamed price, incredibly valuable. So valuable are they that the Talmud says, "Pearls are beyond price." So valuable were they that the Egyptians actually worshiped the pearl and this came over into Roman life. So valuable were they that when women wanted to show their wealth, according to I Timothy 2:9, they put pearls on their head.

And it was said of one lady by the name of Lollia Paulina, the wife of the emperor Caligula, that at one event, she had $36million worth of pearls all over her. In fact, the historian says she had pearls on her head, she had pearls on her hair, she had pearls on her ears, she had pearls on her neck and she had pearls on her fingers. She could have stood in for one of the gates of heaven.

But this was how pearls were perceived in those days. Pliny, the historian says that Cleopatra had two pearls, each worth a half a million dollars and that was in a day when money was 20 times greater in its buying power than it is today. And when the Roman emperors wanted to demonstrate their incredible wealth and show how filthy rich they were, they dissolved pearls in vinegar and drank them in their wine. So pearls were very valuable.

Our Lord in Matthew 7:6 says, “Don’t cast your – ” what? – “pearls before swine.” Because He is trying to compare the worst with the most priceless. You don’t give the most valuable thing to a pig. That’s foolish. And so pearls were really perceived like we perceive diamonds today, very, very, very valuable. In fact, even going into the book of Revelation, we find that when God begins to describe heaven, it is as pearls in its beauty.

And so, here is a man who went around seeking fine pearls. And he would market them because they were good investment, they went up in value and you could diversify, you could put some of your money in the ground, some of your money in pearls, some of your money in property and whatever else and that’s the way people ran their businesses. The one thing you didn’t do, I understand if you’re a smart investor and still don’t, is to put everything into one investment.

But isn’t it interesting that in both cases that’s exactly what these two did. The first man sold everything and bought the one field, the second man sold everything and bought the one pearl. Now, what are the principles from the two parables? You understand them now. What are the principles? I’m going to give you six principles. Listen carefully.

Number one, the kingdom is priceless in value. The kingdom is priceless in value. Both parables are designed to teach us the incomparable value of the kingdom of the Lord. And when we talk about the kingdom of the Lord, we’re talking about salvation; we’re talking about Christ Himself and the gift of salvation that He gives. The knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, the preciousness of what it is to be in His kingdom, the preciousness of fellowshipping with the King, the preciousness of being a subject of the sovereign.

The blessedness of the kingdom is so valuable that it is the most valuable commodity that can ever be found, and only a fool is not willing to sell everything he has to gain it. Nothing comes close in value. In Christ and in His kingdom there is a treasure. There is a treasure that is rich beyond comparison. There is a treasure that is rich beyond conception. There is a treasure that is

incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, eternal.

There is a heavenly treasure lying in the field of this poverty-stricken, bankrupt, accursed world, a treasure sufficient to eternally enrich everyone of earth's poor, miserable, blind and naked inhabitants. Salvation and forgiveness and love and joy and peace and virtue and goodness and glory and heaven and eternal life, all are in that treasure. And the treasure is that salvation and the pearl is that salvation that is equivalent to being in the kingdom.

It's what the hymn writer said when he said, "I found the pearl of greatest price, eternal life so fair, 'twas through the Savior's sacrifice I found that jewel rare." Of all the excellent pearls in the world, of all the things that might be in a field, salvation outstrips all of them in its eternal value. What a gem, what a treasure, and how the world knows little of that treasure. How they do not understand it at all. How they wrap themselves up in that stuff which is valueless.

Secondly, this lesson, the kingdom is not superficially visible. The treasure was hidden, right? And the pearl had to be sought. It isn't just lying around on the surface. The treasure is not obvious to men. The value and the preciousness of the kingdom of heaven, the value and the preciousness of salvation is not viewed by men, they don't see it although it stands there and looks them in the eye.

The world looks at us and they don't understand why we're all about this business of worshiping God. They don't understand why we want to give our lives to Jesus Christ. They don't understand why we want to live and obey a code of ethics and rules that goes against the grain of our deepest lusts and drives. They don't understand why we price this so highly when it means so little to them. No, the kingdom is not superficially visible.

It says in I Corinthians 2, "The natural man understandeth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him." And in IICorinthians 4, it says, "That the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ should shine unto them." So, it isn't that apparent. Even though the message is here and the Word is here, they don't see it. They're blind. It is not superficially manifest. In both cases, one, there is a seeking; the other there was a discovery and a pursuit of that which was discovered.

Some people never bother to look beyond the surface. They're so busy fiddling around with the baubles and the trinkets and the toys and the pebbles that lie on the surface, they never get to the treasure underneath. One writer put it this way, "Under the form of a man, under the privacy and poverty of a Nazarene was the fullness of the Godhead, hidden that day from the wise and Prudent of the world. The light was near them and yet they did not see it. The riches of divine grace were brought to their door and yet they continued poor and miserable."

And that's true. And there have been multitudinous times that I and you, as well, have gone and given the description of the treasure and the pearl to people who have turned their backs and walked away. And they do not care. They do not want that. They do not understand its inestimable value. It is not superficially perceived. That is why it says in Matthew 7:14, "That narrow is the way and few there be that find it." And that is why it says in Matthew 11 that the kingdom is taken by the violent who take it by force. In other words, it must be pursued.

The kingdom is valuable. But the kingdom is also hidden from the superficial lookers who do not want to look deeply to the…to the truth that is hidden in the Word of God. That's why it says in Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter in at the narrow gate for many I say will seek to enter in and shall not be able."

Even the pearl gives this same idea. The pearl, while it is not hidden in the sense that the man doesn't have to dig it out of someplace, it still, originally, had to be gained at the most incredible kind of circumstance, where the person dives into the sea, digs it out of the bottom, opens the shell, finds it there. And now the man pursues it all over the world till he finds it.

And so there is the sense in which we see the hiddenness of the message. The world doesn't see it. You know, Jesus said that "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." And then He said, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which speak of Me." And John said, "He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world – " what? – "knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

You see, just the average run-of-the-mill superficial approach to life, just pumping your way through, trampling across the path of life, day to day, with never a thought for anything that is deep or profound or of true value is not going to render you the truth at all. It isn't on the surface. There has to come that desire at some point to respond. Even in the case of the man who found the treasure, he had to pursue what it was that he originally found. And maybe he hooked his plow on something and was willing to pursue what that something was.

Third thought. The kingdom is personally appropriated, and this is the crux of the parables. The kingdom is personally appropriated. Now the previous two parables give us the idea that the kingdom is just influential, or it's just large. It doesn't say anything about the personal appropriation. And that's why our Lord gives us these two. You have a man in verse 44. You have another man in verse 45. Now we're dealing with individuals. And each of them finds something specifically for himself and appropriates it unto himself. Very important.

Now listen. This is to show us that you can be sort of in the kingdom, under the dominion of God and not be a member of the kingdom. If you're alive in the earth, if you live in the universe, you're under God's rule. Is that right? Because He's the sovereign of the universe. And if you're on the earth, in a sense, you're in the kingdom because He's ruling. But you're not a subject of the King; you're not a

personal member of the kingdom. They are ... just like a lot of people in the church who aren't Christians.

The wide world is under the rule of Jesus Christ, but not a part of His true kingdom. That's why in Matthew 8 when He talks to the Jews, He says, "The sons of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." In other words, there are some Jews who, although they are Jewish and are although under the covenant of God with Israel, are going to forfeit all that that means because they've never personally come to know God, right?

In Romans 2 it says that "circumcision is not the circumcision of the flesh but of the heart." And in Romans 9:6 it says, "All Israel is not Israel." So you could be a Jew, as it were, under that monarchy, or theocracy, that rule of God, and never be a true member of the kingdom. And the same is true today. There are people in the earth who are here but have never appropriated the kingdom. And so it is to the personal appropriation point that we come in this…in these two parables.

It is not enough to be under the influence of the kingdom. It is not enough to just be under the influence of the church, or the influence of Christianity. It is not enough to just, as it were, lodge in the branches or be touched by its permeating influence. There must be personal appropriation. And at some point in time, in order to do that, men and women must come to the point where they realize the value of it.

You know, people spend their time looking for what is not valuable. I mean, it's incredible. Now if you just boil it back down, it was pearls in those days, but today its diamonds. You know, in our world diamonds are the epitome of value. And I don't know if you know what goes on to find diamonds, but it's absolutely incredible.

And I picked up an article that came out of the Los Angeles Times, describing how Consolidated Diamond Mines finds diamonds. And this, of course, is done on the seacoast of Southwest Africa and is an unceasing night and day hunt for diamonds. The article says, "Diamonds are found embedded in what are called marine terraces, ancient Atlantic beaches of wave-rounded boulders, stones, gravel and sand congeal into a concrete like substance called conglomerate.

"Now, in that conglomerate the diamonds are lodged. It is covered in places by fifty feet of wave-deposited or wind-blown and amid desert sand. Mammoth earth scrapers and bulldozers claw away the sand down to the marine terraces. Other scrapers and bulldozers then back out the conglomerate down to the ocean beach bedrock and the conglomerate averages five-feet deep, then meticulously hydraulic excavators and twenty-man gangs with foot-long nylon brushes, sweep out the conglomerate residues in the ancient bed rock's crevices and hollows, and the move is on to find the diamonds.

“The sweepers may themselves find up to two thousand diamonds a week. And after it is scraped and dug and brushed and dynamited from bed rock, the conglomerate is hauled to a processing plant where its boulders, gravel, sand are pounded, milled washed, bounced crushed and grated away. And the remaining 15 percent concentrate is sluiced into a pharasilicone solution with a 3.0 specific gravity.” As if anyone cared. “And then anything with a 3.5 specific gravity sinks to the bottom and they separate it.”

Now, they go through what they call a spot-fluorescent operation, to find the diamonds and it goes into a bin and is sifted and sorted and cut and all of this and the end of it all, the managing director says, “We treat 180 million parts of material to get one part diamond.”

This reminds me of Job 28. Everything reminds me of a Bible verse, but this reminds me of Job 28, where it says that people go into the earth to find diamonds, to find emeralds, to find anything that is valuable, precious stones. And they dig holes and they go where the light has never been and where the bird is never seen and they dam up the rivers and they plow deep into the earth and all of this and they’re looking for this kind of stuff that is worth nothing.

You know, basically, when you have a diamond, you know what you have? You have a diamond. That’s what you have. And it can’t do anything for you. Can’t make you feel better. Can’t give you peace. Can’t solve your problems. You just have a diamond. And I was walking down the street in Washington D.C. some months ago. And there was a store and it said, Diamonds, one carat, $100.00. I thought, “That’s cheap.”

So I went in, and this person waiting on people. I said, “What are you…how could you sell a diamond?” Just walking down the street and noticed it. “How could you sell a diamond so cheap?” “Well, it’s not a real diamond, but no one could tell the difference.” No one could tell the difference. That even makes diamonds worth less. They’re not worth anything.

And the things that people go through. And then in Job 28, after all of that, he says in verse 12 “Now that you’ve been looking for all that stuff, let me tell you this. What’s really valuable you never bother to look for, and that’s wisdom.” If you want to know the real value of things in life you’re not going to find them in those places. “You’re going to find them in the revelation of God,” the chapter goes on to say. You see, God offers men what is really valuable. And it’s incredible the extremes they go to to find what’s worthless.

A fourth principle. The kingdom is precious, it is hidden and it is personally appropriated. And, fourthly, the kingdom is the source of joy. If you’ll look at verse 44, it was for the joy that the man had when he found the treasure that he sold everything to buy it. It was joy. Now that is a very, very insightful addition to this Parable. It doesn’t have to say that in there. But it does and it’s very, very

important. Because the Lord is acknowledging something that I have believed to be true all my life. And it's confirmed here.

The basic desire of all human beings on the face of the earth is to be happy. That's it. You say, "Well, I know some people who love misery." Yes, they are happy being miserable, but it is happiness that they're after. I don't understand that approach, but if misery makes them happy, it still proves the point. The world is seeking for happiness, for joy. People want to feel good. The Lord knows that. Joy.

I mean, Jesus even said in John 15:11 to His disciples, in summing up the best of what He had to offer, "The things I've spoken unto you, I've spoken that My joy might remain in you and your joy might be – " what? – "full." And I John 1, John says, "These things I write unto you that your joy might be full." And in John 16, our Lord says in verse 24, "Hitherto have you asked nothing in My name, ask and you'll receive that your joy may be full."

And Romans 14 says, "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." It is joy. In Romans 15, that great benediction says, "that God may grant unto you joy." People want to be joyful, they want to be happy. And here it is. It is all bound up, isn't it, in the treasure? True joy. Comes in the discovery of the kingdom of heaven and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, the kingdom is precious. The kingdom is hidden. The kingdom is personally appropriated and the kingdom is the source of true joy. For the joy of it, this man sold everything he had to take that treasure for his own. For joy's sake. Nothing wrong with that. The Lord wants us to rejoice. The Bible says, "Rejoice always and again I say, Rejoice." We should be the most rejoicing of all people, for we have found the treasure.

There's a fifth principle, and this is a very, very helpful one. The kingdom may be entered from different circumstances. The kingdom may be entered from different circumstances. Now, there are some similarities. In both cases you have a man, both cases they find something of great value, both cases they understand its value, and in both cases they are willing to pay any price for it. So they're very similar, aren't they?

But there's one big difference. In case number one, the man just comes across the treasure. In case number two, the man knows exactly what he's looking for. Now even if number one was a treasure hunter, he didn't know what he was looking for. Number two did.

Now, what does this tell us? Well, the man in the field, most likely, was not looking for treasure. He was going through whatever routine he went through, working, or plowing a field, or building something, or preparing some of the soil for whatever. And he was in the field and he was going along seeking sustenance for his life, doing what he did and he stumbled across a fortune.

Now, there are people who enter the kingdom like that aren't there? Sure there are. The apostle Paul, was he seeking to enter the kingdom? Not on your life. He thought he was in it. He was on his way to Damascus to kill Christians. The next thing he knew, God blasted him out of heaven, he landed in the dirt, and he was redeemed. He was just doing his thing. He was just plowing his field and he stumbled into a fortune.

Well, how about the Samaritan woman? She was thirsty. She came down to a well to get a drink of water, went home redeemed. And then there was the man born blind, and all he really wanted out of life was to be able to see and he went away redeemed also. And, you know, there are some people who come to church to mock the preacher. And then they get saved. So you better be careful. There are people who aren't particularly seeking that but they stumble into the treasure.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, when he was young, sort of resolutely attended church because it was the thing to do. But he didn't know Christ, and he wasn't seeking Christ. He was content with his religiosity. He was only 15 years old one morning, when he decided to…it was a New Year's morning, and he decided it would be proper to go to church. His biographer said there was such a blizzard of snow that he was not able to reach the church he was in the habit of attending.

"When I could go no farther," he said, "I turned down a court and came to a little primitive Methodist church. The preacher who was to have conducted the service never got there because he was held up by the weather. And quickly one of the officers had to be brought forward to conduct the service with a congregation of perhaps 15 people. The man," said Spurgeon, "was really stupid. His text was, Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. And he just kept repeating it because he didn't have anything else to say."

And something about young Spurgeon caught the preacher's eye. "Young man, he said suddenly, "You look very miserable. Miserable in life and miserable in death, you will be if you don't obey my text." And suddenly he literally shouted, "Young man, look to Jesus, look, look, look."

And said Spurgeon, "I looked. And then and there the cloud was gone and the darkness rolled away and that moment I saw the Son." He wasn't searching for anything but it got him anyway. He stumbled into a fortune. Few people who have ever lived have affected so many souls as Charles Haddon Spurgeon. I don't know who that stupid guy was that just kept repeating the text, but it was of God.

And then there was the other, the one who looked for the pearls. He knew what he was looking for. He wasn't the mundane man that the man plowing the field was. He wasn't the guy who was content with the secular or the mildly religious; this guy was really seeking something of genuine value. To me, this is the true seeker. This is the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8. This is the Cornelius of Acts 1. This

is the Lydia of Acts 16. This is the Philippian jailer of Acts 16. This is the Berean of Acts 17.

This is the one who is seeking God and seeking virtue and seeking that which is of true value. But what he doesn't understand in his seeking of religion, which always comes through the works of men, is that all of it is wrapped up in just one pearl, just one. He was looking for pearls; he was looking for things that were valuable.

He was looking for goodness and honesty and virtue and God and forgiveness and peace and joy and heaven and salvation. And maybe he thought it was all over the place, in a multitude of pearls. And the shock to him was that it was all in one. Everything he needed was in one. And so, there are people who come into the kingdom, almost by accident, only not from God's side. And then there are people who search.

Some months ago a couple celebrating their 50th anniversary…the husband is blind…sitting right here in the front row, came up to me afterwards. And tears in their eyes, they said, "Could we have dinner with your family today?" And we don't normally do that, but we felt, for some reason, the leading of the Lord and we said, "Okay, we'd do that." And we sat at the table and they began to weep and they said, "Do you know that we have sought God for fifty years? For fifty years.

"When we were first married, we desired to find God, we desired to know God. And we sought him in religion after religion after religion after religion. And, finally, we ended up for years in the Unity," which is right out of the pit. "And one day we came home and it seemed as though there was such emptiness there, and we turned on the radio and on you came. And before you were halfway through your message, both of us broke down in tears and said, "That is the truth that we've sought for fifty years. And we had to come here from Oklahoma to tell you about it."

Now there are people who search, there are people who stumble into it. And then there are combinations of both, right? But the kingdom can be entered from different circumstances.

Now the last point. Now you get this one because this is so important. The kingdom is made personal by a transaction. The kingdom is made personal by a transaction. In both of these cases, the word buying or bought is involved. Now some people just really get nervous here and they say, "Wait a minute. You're not telling us you buy your salvation. You're not telling us they bought their salvation."

Listen carefully. In a sense, the Bible says they did, but you have to understand in what sense. Now certainly, the story itself is a…a real treasure bought with money, a real pearl bought with money. But that's only the story. The kingdom of God is bought, but you don't take the money out of the parable into the kingdom. So whatever the exchange is here, it wouldn't be money.

In fact, the Bible says you can't buy your salvation with money. A rich man can no more buy his way into the kingdom than you can shove a camel through the eye of a needle. That isn't the point. And the Bible tells us that salvation is God's free gift, Romans 3. And it is not of works lest any man should boast. We don't purchase it on our own with our own goods. But it is bought nonetheless.

There's a great Old Testament passage that people always relate to salvation by grace and it's in the 55th chapter and I'll just read it to you, the first verse of Isaiah, 55:1. It says this. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money, come buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."

And everybody says, "Ah yes, without money, and ah yes, without price, and you don't need any money." But they forget that it says come and buy, come and buy, come and buy. You buy it. You just don't buy it with money. There is a purchase transaction in salvation. You say, "Well, what is it? Well, it isn't money. And it isn't human works. You say, "What is it?" There's got to be an exchange. Here it is. The transaction is this. You give up all you have for all He has. Did you get that? That is the essence of the transaction of salvation. I give up all I have and God gives me all He has.

Now listen very carefully. I do not want to be misunderstood on this point, and you need to understand it clearly in your own mind. In Luke 9:57, "It came to pass that as they went on the way, a certain man said to Him, 'Lord, I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest, I'm going to come into Your kingdom, I'm going to be Your follower, I'm going to be Your subject, You're going to be my Lord.' And Jesus said to him, 'All right, then foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' "

All right, here's the price. Your comfort. You give Me your comfort and I'll give you My kingdom. No deal. He wouldn't make the transaction. The next guy says, "I want to follow You, but I want to bury my father." Now his father wasn't even dead yet. He wanted to hang around for the inheritance. Jesus said, "You let the dead bury their dead, you come with Me and preach the kingdom." No deal. The first guy wouldn't give his comfort. The second guy wouldn't give his money, his inheritance.

And another says, "I will follow Thee, but let me first go say goodbye to everybody at home in my house." And Jesus said, "Nobody putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." You cannot plow a straight furrow looking in the opposite direction. And this is no deal either. This guy can't give up his family.

Now you don't get saved by money and you don't get saved by all of these other elements. That isn't the salvation factor, but it is indicative of whether you are willing to make the transaction of salvation which says that nothing stands between my willingness to give up myself to receive you. That's the issue. In Matthew chapter 10 in verse 37. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me and he that loveth daughter or son more than Me is not worthy of Me."

In other words, if you are not willing to give up, if it needs to be given up, your family, then you're not going to enter the kingdom. "He that taketh not His cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me." And here it comes, "He that findeth his life shall – " what? – "lose it, and he that loseth his life, for My sake, shall find it." There's the transaction. You give up all you are and you receive all He is. That's salvation. In Matthew chapter 16…and I could go on forever with scriptures on this. But 16:24, Jesus said unto His disciples, "If any man desires to come after Me – " here is the transaction – "let him deny – " whom? – "himself."

Salvation is an act where I exchange me for Him as ruler of my life. That's the basic principle. A rich young ruler came to Jesus in Matthew 19. And he said, "What do I have to do to get into Your kingdom? What do I have to do to have eternal life?" And here's what Jesus said. "If you want to be in My kingdom, then go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor and then you will have treasure in heaven."

You want My treasure, just like the treasure in the field, you want My treasure, then give away all of yours. Now, do you get saved by giving your money to the poor? No. You come to Christ and you are saved when you are willing to abandon everything to affirm that He is the Lord of your life. That's the transaction. That's the transaction.

We exchange ourselves, our sin, our will, our control of our lives for Christ's leadership. Now, I don't think that people who are saved, at the moment they're saved understand all the ramifications of that. I don't think they understand all the elements of that. But I believe true salvation is marked by a willingness to do that as that understanding unfolds.

It's not saying, "Well, you can get saved when you stop your sinning and stop your cursing, and stop your drinking, and stop your wife beating, and stop your arguing and your fighting and your lusting, then come to Me." No, no, no. It is saying - I can't get rid of those things. I exchange all my own will and my own strength and my own resources, I strip myself bare and I receive Your strength and Your power. That's the transaction. The willingness to abandon everything, everything under Christ's lordship.

An illustration of this is in Philippians chapter 3, and I want you to listen carefully to it. Here's Paul. It says that he's going to tell you what he had in his flesh. This was what he had that he would consider his riches. This would be his all that he possesses. This was his stuff. He says, "I was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel. I was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee."

In other words, the stuff that was in his account was his Jewishness, his belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. And that was important because Benjamin was one of the good tribes, historically. And so

he was identified as a true Jew, as a Pharisee. “He had zeal. He was righteous, according to the law, and he was blameless.” Boy, my Judaism, my self-righteousness, my holiness, and all of these things, that was my stock in trade. That was my reservoir.

But when confronted with Christ, what happened? “Those things that were gain to me, those I counted – ” what? – “loss.” And that’s the transaction. “Yes, I count all things but loss; I count them dung, manure, that I may gain Christ.” You see, there’s the man buying the treasure, right? There’s the man buying the pearl. He will liquidate everything. All of his self-righteousness, all of his own resources, all of his own self-will is abandoned to the affirmation of the lordship of Jesus Christ.

And he does not understand all that that implies. He doesn't understand all that that means, but the willingness is there. Any price is worth it if I can be found in Him, if I can know Him, if I can attain the resurrection of the dead, any price. Now, I think the cost factor in the presentation of salvation is not stressed often enough. We are calling for a transaction.

In Luke 14, the Lord says, “A man builds a tower. If he does, he counts the cost, whether he’s sufficient to finish it. If a king makes war, he counts the cost, consults whether he’s able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand.” Nobody goes in blind. You count the cost. And there’s cost, but it’s worth the cost. The pearl is so valuable and the treasure is so valuable that it’s worth any cost.

A week ago I cuddled up on the couch with Melinda and I said I want to read you a story, honey, that I think you’ll like. It’s about a caterpillar named Stripe. And so she jumped up and we read about Stripe. Stripe was a caterpillar and he just did what caterpillar’s do. He just kind of walked around in a field a little bit. He got kind of bored and so one day he looked off in the distance and he saw a pillar going up into the sky. And he thought, “I wonder what that is.”

And he got closer and he saw that it was a caterpillar pillar. It was just a pillar full of caterpillars climbing up. And he couldn’t see at the top because there was a cloud up there. And it was just a bunch of caterpillars climbing on each other going into the cloud. And he thought, “Well, maybe that’s what caterpillars do; they just climb up caterpillar pillars.” And so he got on the caterpillar pillar and he started to climb.

And when you’re climbing on a caterpillar pillar, you step on anybody’s head to get up further. And so he just kept pushing his way up the caterpillar pillar and he’d ask people now and then, “What was at the top?” And they all said, “We don’t know, but it seems as though everybody’s going there so it must be important.” And so they all just kept climbing. And then one time, he…he stepped on the head of a little yellow caterpillar who’s real pretty and he felt bad about that.

And then he did something you're never suppose to do when you're climbing a caterpillar pillar. He looked the other caterpillar in the eye, and you don't make relationships with people you're stepping on. And then when he made the mistake of looking in the eye, he thought, "That's a lovely little yellow caterpillar." And he said to her, he said, "You know, maybe it'd be better not to climb this caterpillar pillar but to go back to the field and just hug a lot.

And so the two of them worked their way back down the caterpillar pillar and into the field and they hugged a lot. And after a while, hugging got a little boring and he said, "Ithink I'm going to go back up the caterpillar pillar and see what's up there. Hugging is kind of boring." And she said, "Ican't go back to that." And so he left her and she was very lonely.

And she was crawling around out there in the field and she looked up on a branch and she saw something funny hanging down. It was half of a little case and then it was half of a caterpillar. And she said to the caterpillar, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm spinning a cocoon. And she said, "Well, why are you doing that?" And the caterpillar said, "Because I'm going to die." And she said, "Well, why do you want to die?" He said, "Because if you die, you get born all over as a butterfly."

And she said, "Are you sure? Because what if you die and then you just die, and you don't get born as a butterfly?" "Oh," he says, "You do get born as a butterfly because that's what caterpillars are made to be, butterflies, but they have to die first." And she thought about that a long time because that was a big move. And she decided, too, she'd be willing to die and be born as a butterfly. And then she wouldn't have to climb the caterpillar pillar. She could fly over the top and just look down and see what was up there. And so she spun a cocoon and she died.

And guess what? She did get born as a butterfly. And she flew over to the caterpillar pillar and there she found Stripe, and he was almost to the top. And he was just close enough to the top to find out what the top was all about. You know what happened when you got to the top? Somebody underneath pushed you off and you fell all the way to the bottom and died. And before he did that, she rescued him and he spun his cocoon and he became a butterfly too.

What does that say? I asked Melinda. She said, "I know what that says. That says if you're willing to die you can be born again as a Christian." That's right. That's the message of the parable. That's what it's saying. Think of Christ. He took His life and threw it for a world redeemed. And ere His agony was done before the westering sun went down, crowning that day with its crimson crown. He knew that He had won.

The kingdom is precious. The kingdom is hidden. The kingdom is personal. The kingdom is joyous. The kingdom is entered from different circumstances, but always the price is to abandon myself to receive the supreme sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

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