

## **Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

July 26, 2020

Psalm 125:1-5 (NIV) <sup>1</sup>Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. <sup>2</sup>As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore. <sup>3</sup>The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous, for then the righteous might use their hands to do evil. <sup>4</sup>Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, to those who are upright in heart. <sup>5</sup>But those who turn to crooked ways the LORD will banish with the evildoers. Peace be upon Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 (NIV) <sup>6</sup>For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. <sup>7</sup>The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup>But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

Romans 8:28-39 (NIV) <sup>28</sup>And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. <sup>31</sup>What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge

against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:44-52 (NIV) <sup>44</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a 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. <sup>45</sup>"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup>When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. <sup>47</sup>" Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup>When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup>This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous <sup>50</sup>and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>51</sup>"Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. <sup>52</sup>He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

## ***The Treasure of the Kingdom***

Matthew 13:44-52

### ❑ **The joy of the treasure**

(verse 44; Philippians 3:7-8; 1 Peter 1:8)

### ❑ **The treasure worth seeking**

(verses 45-46; Matthew 6: 19-21, 33; Jeremiah 29:13-14a; Luke 6:43-45)

### ❑ **The treasure of salvation**

(verses 47-50; Philippians 3:9; Isaiah 12:3; Psalm 51:12; Matthew 25:21)

### ❑ **The treasure of God's word**

(verses 51-52; Job 23:12; Psalm 119:11; Proverbs 2:1-6; Deuteronomy 7:6; Titus 2:14)

## ***Treasure of the Kingdom***

Matthew 13:44-52

Last month a man found a treasure hidden in the Rocky Mountains said to be worth 2 million dollars. It was placed there ten years ago by millionaire art collector, Forrest Fenn, who left clues for finding the hoard in a poem published in his autobiography, "The Thrill of the Chase."

Fenn designed the treasure hunt as a means of leaving a legacy after he was told in 1998 that he would die of cancer. Wanting to leave his mark, and encourage others to get into the outdoors, he devised a plan: he would fill a small bronze chest and load it with treasures he had acquired—ancient jewels, gold, jade, diamonds—take it into the mountains, and die beside it.

Fenn recovered from the cancer, but continued with his plan to hide the treasure and then lived to see his concealed riches found.

He claims that an estimated 350,000 people tried to find the treasure, some quitting their jobs, and at least two who lost their lives seeking it.

We are fascinated with stories of buried treasure—and it was no less so in Jesus' day.

Jesus told a story that was not uncommon in antiquity, since the wealthy often hid treasures during uncertain times with the intent of digging it up again when the situation improved. Finding a long-lost fortune was a dream many wished would come true.

So, Jesus told a parable to illustrate:

### **The joy of the treasure**

*<sup>44</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a 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."*

This message is part of a series from the gospel of Matthew titled, *The Good News of the Kingdom*.

That theme comes directly from Matthew 9:35 which tell us that *Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness* (NRSV).

In today's lesson, Jesus teaches about the *Treasure of the Kingdom* and the joy it brings.

What Jesus is saying, is that the kingdom of heaven is a treasure so wonderful, so valuable, so precious, that, by comparison, everything else recedes into insignificance.

It was no sacrifice for the finder, to sell everything to buy that field and acquire its treasure. Jesus said, that person, *in his joy went and sold all he had.*

The kingdom of God is so valuable that losing everything on earth, but getting the kingdom, is pure joy.

It is what Jesus meant when He taught His disciples to pray, *Your kingdom come, Your will be done.*

The Kingdom of our heavenly Father has come to us in Jesus, to accomplish His saving purpose in our lives and to make us righteous and inheritors of that kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven that Jesus proclaimed was nothing less than having Him as Lord and savior.

Having the omnipotent, saving reign of Christ in our lives is so precious that, if we lose everything, in order to have it, it is a joyful exchange.

The treasure we ought to long for is not possessions—it is a person—a person to take control of our lives and rule us with goodness and kindness and love.

The kingdom of heaven has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. The treasure is Jesus as Lord of our lives; it is coming under His benevolent, good and kind rule. Jesus is our treasure.

It is a treasure worth forsaking all to have.

This was, in fact, the experience of the Apostle Paul. His whole life changed dramatically when he met Jesus Christ:

In Philippians 3:7-8 *7But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.* (NIV)

1 Peter 1:8 describes what gaining Christ means: *Though you have not seen [Jesus], you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.* (NIV)

The kingdom of heaven is, in essence, a relationship with the King.

Jesus immediately offers another parable instructing us that the Kingdom of heaven is:

### **The treasure worth seeking**

*45"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*

To have Jesus as our Lord and savior, to have Him rule in our hearts (which is what the kingdom of heaven looks like here on earth) is a treasure worth seeking.

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus instructed us to . . . *seek first his kingdom and his righteousness* . . . (NIV)

God speaks to us through the prophet Jeremiah saying, *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD* (29:13-14a NIV).

Jesus said, *the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.*

Pearls were valued for their beauty and costliness. The merchant of Jesus' parable had been in possession of many fine pearls which he had bought and sold over the years, but with singular focus, when he found the one pearl that was more valuable than all the others put together, sold all his inventory, and everything he owned to possess it.

The kingdom of heaven is beautiful beyond comparison, and infinitely valuable and is worth seeking.

Jesus warned about seeking the right kind of treasure in Matthew 6:19-21

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (ESV)*

And Jesus also warned that the fruit of our lives will reflect the treasure of our hearts:

Jesus said in Luke 6:43-45 <sup>43</sup>*For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. <sup>44</sup>For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush.*

<sup>45</sup>*The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. (NASB)*

Jesus then tells a third parable, much like the one we looked at last week about the wheat and the weeds. Like that one, this is a parable about judgment, but conversely, I believe it tells us of:

### **The treasure of salvation**

<sup>47</sup>*Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup>When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup>This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous <sup>50</sup>and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Jesus used a common illustration which the disciples would have been very familiar with.

When I had the privilege of traveling to Israel, nearly 20 years ago, I spend the first night there in Tiberius, on the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee. I woke up very early the next morning to watch the sun rise over the lake. Just after sunrise, the local fishermen, in their small but motorized boats, were coming to the shore and unloading their catch; sorting out the good fish from the bad.

In the coming age, the judgment of the wicked will also be the salvation of the righteous.

Remember from last week that our righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in Philippians 3:9 that he might *be found in [Jesus Christ], not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (NIV)*

Salvation is a treasure that brings joy.

Isaiah prophesied: *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. (Isaiah 12:3 ESV)*

David prayed in Psalm 51:12 *Restore to me the joy of your salvation (ESV)*

One day we long to hear: . . . *‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will*

*set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'* (Matthew 25:21 ESV)

Finally, Jesus taught them a parable about:

### **The treasure of God's word**

*<sup>51</sup>"Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. <sup>52</sup>He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed [discipled] about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."*

The treasures spoken about here are the treasures of God's Word—both the old and the new. The new treasures are the teaching of Jesus, and the good news about Jesus, that is contained in the gospels.

Some scholars think that this saying, which is unique to Matthew, is the organizing principle (the key) to his gospel. No other gospel quotes the Old Testament more, and relates it to the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures tell us that God's Word is a treasure:

Job spoke about God's word in chapter 23 verse 12.

*I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.* [NIV]

In Psalm 119:11 says, *Your word I have treasured in my heart . . .* (NASB)

Proverbs 2:1-6 gives this instruction: *My son, if you will receive my words; And treasure my commandments within you, <sup>2</sup>Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; . . .*

*<sup>4</sup>If you seek her as silver; And search for her as for hidden treasures; <sup>5</sup>Then you will discern the fear of the Lord; And discover the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup>For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.* (NASB)

God's Word is infinitely valuable and precious because it teaches us the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God who is a treasure beyond all imagination.

The Word of God, the holy Scriptures, is where we find the pearl of great price—our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is more precious, more priceless—much more—than all the world can offer us.

Jesus ought to be our treasure which fills us with joy, because we are His treasure which He bought at a great price.

But Jesus did not consider that price as too high a cost to pay to redeem us and make us His own.

Again, and again in the Old Testament God spoke of Israel as His treasured possession. An example is found in our Old Testament lesson from:

Deuteronomy 7:6 (ESV) *"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

And now, we are part of that treasured possession through Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:14 [Jesus Christ] *gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* (ESV)

You are infinitely valuable to God, and His kingdom and his reign over us in Jesus Christ ought to be for us a treasure so precious, so priceless that everything else we have or hope for fades into insignificance.

Again, in the words of Paul, <sup>8</sup> . . . *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.*

Is Jesus, and his Lordship over your life your most valuable treasure that you would lose everything to have?

That is the choice many believers around the world are forced to make. This was true for a Christian man named Samson in the country of Myanmar, formally known as Burma.

60-year-old Samson lived in a typical Burmese village, in an elevated wooden hut with 20 of his loved ones. His children and grandchildren stayed with him, as is typical for families in Asia.

“When our family accepted Jesus Christ, the village people learned that we became Christian. Our neighbors informed our village chief and discussed [this with the religious] authorities. They had a big meeting . . . and they called our family members. They also called other families from the village to attend this meeting. So, in that meeting, there were a lot of people, around 250. They were all talking about what they would do with my family.

“I was asked: ‘Do you really believe in the Christian faith? Are you really going to believe in Jesus? Are you not coming back to our religion?’

“I said: ‘We are not going to deny our faith. We’re not going to reject our faith. We’ll believe Jesus until we die!’”

Two day later, an angry mob led by the village chief surrounded their home and began pelting it with large rocks. They were intent on burning down the house with Samuel and his family in it, but miraculously God prevented them from doing this and spared their lives. Still, they were forced to leave the village and lost everything they owned.

But Samuel told workers from the ministry, Open Doors, “Even though I don’t have money, even though I don’t have anything—as long as I have Jesus—I am joyful. Before, even though we had money, we were not happy. There was no peace. Now, I have peace. I am happy. I have joy.”

Jesus said,

*44" The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a 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.*

Let us pray . . .

Benediction: 1 Peter 2:9-10

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (NIV)*

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*