

Matthew 13:44-46 - 10th after Pentecost / 5.8.2007

Giving everything for God's Kingdom

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.

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

⁴⁴ “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. ⁴⁶ When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it! [NLT]

‘Putting all your eggs in one basket’ - when planning for your future or making business decisions that really would not be clever. Selling everything which you have built up over many years, so as to invest this money in a new business to market a new wonder product leaves you open to failure. Certainly - if everything goes right - you could make great profits, but is the risk really worth putting everything you have on the line.

Yet that is precisely what these two parables that Jesus tells here expect: to gain the kingdom of heaven we need to take an unprotected risk. He says that we will only receive eternal life, by

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Of course Jesus is not running a course for business management here. What He does is to show us what we need to do so that we may truly be His followers. What Jesus is doing is to give us instruction on what to do when we find this treasure of incomparable value.

Finding this treasure - and recognising its worth. It seems that we can't take it for granted that this is always the case. That may be, because the treasure of God does not come in the way in which our world measures worth.

This treasure is hidden for many because of the way in which the Son of God entered our world - after all, what can one expect of the child of simple parents, who was

born in a stable, and was later raised in the small outpost of Nazareth. Nathanael (when he received the invitation to come to Jesus) was certainly not the only one to think, ‘Can anything good come from Nazareth’.

The treasure was and is hidden for many, because Jesus taught that the essence of His kingdom is not to be served, but rather to serve; that one must become like a little child to enter this kingdom. We live in a world in which importance is measured by the number of people who serve you, by how many bodyguards one has and the size of the cavalcade which goes by with flashing blue lights, by the amount of self-importance people can portray.

Somebody who does not attach any importance to our measures of who is a VIP - who treats all equally - is to be treated with a measure of suspicion. There is a nice story about a pastor attending a conference and commenting - in connection with Jesus' willingness to go to sinners - that he always had the feeling that Jesus was far too liberal in his views.

The treasure is hidden for many, because they only see the curse, which lies on every one who hangs on the wood - and fail to recognise that Jesus took the curse which should have been on us, and so opened the way to life for us.

Many fail to recognise this treasure, because it does not only apply to a select few who live a blameless life, but that this treasure is available for all to share in.

Perhaps we too have not fully recognised the worth of God's treasure, because we have been busy accumulating our ‘treasures’. That may be doing all we can to get ahead in life - making great sacrifices which often affect the people around us, just so that we can be ‘successful.’

The founder of Habitat for Humanity - who have built quite a number of houses in the Durban area for low income earners, as well as being involved in a project at Shongweni to build homes for AIDS orphans - was one such person, intent on making a ‘success’ of life. Only his home-life was an absolute mess, and it had reached the point where his wife threatened to get a divorce, because they were not living as a married couple or family in any case. For this man this statement by his wife was a huge wake-up call - he sold everything and gave his wealth to charity, and decided to involve himself in the business of building homes for needy people all over the world.

Having our treasures - those may involve our traditions, and the importance we attach to them. I don't only mean the Zulu people either, because making tradition

one's treasure - also in the church - is something which we all are threatened by. That does not mean that we should simply throw all tradition overboard - only if tradition so dictates what we do - and don't do - that we can't change things which stop us from living as people of God, then the tradition has become a curse.

Such traditions can be the way things have been done in the church for many decades or even centuries - nobody really understands the tradition any more, but one simply carries on doing the same old thing. As much as we may like our traditions, if they prevent us from living as followers of Christ, then we need to put them aside.

Recognising the wonderful treasure God has given us: a new relationship with Himself. Recognising this treasure which gives us real worth as children of God - not just a worth which depends on how productive we are in our business or how much money we bring into our business.

For some this treasure is found 'quite by chance'. They had been living their lives, going about their business, spending time and money on their hobbies - when, almost out of the blue, this treasure was there. Will they be able to turn away from the life they had chosen for themselves? Will they be able to accept that life really only is meaningful when Jesus Christ is at the centre - and not what they would like to do? Can they set apart their Sunday for Christ, instead of for their sport or hobby?

Others may have spent their lives looking for a real meaning to life - they may have read many books, they may have searched for meaning in the different religions and philosophies. One day, however, they discover the treasure of being saved by God's grace - of being saved by Christ - without having to do anything. Can they put aside all they have worked for? Will they be able to accept the harsh message of the cross and believe that it is only by putting their faith in the Christ who suffered and died on the cross they will have peace?

Recognising this wonderful treasure - and suddenly realising that everything else is without any worth, if we don't have what this treasure offers.

'Putting all our eggs in one basket' - that is not a risky practise when it comes to having eternal life. It is only by receiving what our Lord gives us that we have a life which is truly worth living.