

The King and The Kingdom Part 4

Turn to Matthew 13 as we continue our series on the King and His Kingdom. When we talk about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of heaven, we are talking not mainly about a place or a realm, but about the rule and reign of God. While it can include a place, a location we call heaven, the kingdom of God is the rule and reign, the dominion and authority of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in our life. It is the saving reign of God that takes us from the domain of sin and death to his kingdom of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ! We've been looking at a series of stories or parables that Jesus told to help us understand the nature, the character and values of the Kingdom of God. This morning we are going to look at three more parables of the kingdom.

“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. 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 bought it. Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 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. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:44-50

We don't know if Jesus told these stories all at once or if he told them on different occasions and Matthew collected them this way. Once again there are different ways of interpreting these stories since Jesus didn't explain these parables to us. I want to just point out the main things we clearly see in these stories and what they say about the kingdom.

Let's set aside the parable of the net and the fish for a while and focus on the first two parables. Consider these three things we immediately see in these parables.

The inestimable value of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven, the saving rule and reign of God in our life, is worth everything! It is beyond measure. It's the treasure that when you find it, it changes everything in your life and it's worth whatever the cost to have it. It is THE PEARL, the one that everyone has been searching for and you found it. There is not another one like it. That's the kingdom. That's the life of God, the eternal life you find when you find Jesus and make him the Savior and Lord of your life. It is worth everything. That's

why both men in the story sold everything to get the field, to get the pearl, because what they found was worth more than everything else in their lives. Nothing can compare to knowing God and having his salvation, his saving grace and presence in your life!

The Great Joy of Discovering the Kingdom. Ever watch Antique Roadshow or American Pickers? Hunting for that find of a lifetime. The undiscovered Picasso, the uncirculated Mickey Mantle or Honus Wagner baseball card found in an attic. It's joy in discovering the treasure or the pearl you've been searching for your whole life. The parable says "in his joy he went and sold everything and bought the field." When you discover Jesus, when you discover that your sins can be forgiven, that there is a new life available, that you don't have to live in sin and shame and you don't have to die and spend eternity in hell away from God, when you discover that... No wonder they joyfully sold all they had to get the field and the pearl. When you find Jesus, you not only find the joy, you find everything!

The Kingdom and the accompanying joy are worth any price. I'm not implying you can buy salvation or buy your way into the kingdom of God. You enter the kingdom by grace through faith in Jesus, but there is a price. The parables said they sold all they had, everything they had. The cost of discipleship, the cost of following Jesus may well be the loss of all things. The Apostle Paul said, "**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 and be found in him...**" **Philippians 3:8-9** We will talk more about the cost in a moment, but understand nothing compares to knowing Jesus, knowing your sins are forgiven, you have the promise of eternal life in him, you have peace in your heart that nothing can steal or destroy. Let me mention a couple of other things about the parables.

The kingdom is available to all. Notice the guy that finds the treasure in the field, it doesn't appear he was a treasure hunter. He wasn't looking. He wasn't interested in treasure. He didn't figure he needed his life changed. He just stumbled upon something but it was available to him, the non-seeker!

You aren't spiritual? Neither was this guy? Not looking for God or salvation? Neither was this guy. Not interested in a life changing experience? Neither was this guy. He was just walking in a field, but that treasure was waiting for him. And when he found it, he was wise enough to recognize what he had found. The truth is, while he wasn't looking, God was waiting, looking for him! God said through the prophet Isaiah, "**I revealed myself to those who did not**

ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’” Isaiah 65:1

We use a term, “prevenient grace.” It means before we know God, before we call on him for salvation, before we ever receive his grace and forgiveness, out of his great love he begins to reach out to us. He begins to call us, to get our attention. He plants the treasure in our path. You may not have been looking for salvation, you didn’t even realize you needed a Savior, but something got your attention. You noticed something in front of you you hadn’t seen before. “What’s that in the field?” And you start digging, you look, and you find a treasure beyond anything you could have imagined. That’s Jesus, that’s the kingdom, that’s grace.

The other guy, the pearl merchant was a seeker. This was what he did. He looked for pearls. He knew the difference between average pearls and exquisite pearls and he went looking for them in shops and cities and markets everywhere.

You may be more like the pearl merchant. You are a seeker of truth. You’ve been examining comparative religions, studying philosophy, mysticism, Islam, Judaism, trying to find the answer. Finally, you decide to read the bible your grandmother gave you. Looking for truth you find a man, a teacher, a Savior. You find the One who gave his life for you as a sacrifice to atone for your sin. You find the one who offers salvation and forgiveness, who brings hope and healing and peace. Like the pearl merchant, you are wise enough to know what you’ve found. This isn’t a pearl, this is THE PEARL. Nothing else can compare. This is forgiveness of sin, this is hope and peace, this is heaven and eternal life.

Both of the men recognized what was missing, what they did not have. “I have a lot, but I don’t have treasure. I have a lot of pearls, but I don’t have THE PEARL.” We don’t know what we are missing until we are shown the truth, the treasure, the pearl. I didn’t know life could be like this. I didn’t know you could lay down at night without guilt and remorse. I didn’t know you could live with peace. These guys realized, when they saw the treasure, the pearl – “That’s what’s been missing from my life.” Open your eyes. Jesus and his saving grace, his offer of fellowship, forgiveness, and eternal life – that’s what’s been missing in your life.

The kingdom is available but a choice is required. Both of these men were wise enough to recognize the value and importance of what they found, but a choice was required if they were going to acquire the treasure and the pearl. They could have admired the treasure, the pearl, but simply said, “It’s too much trouble. It requires too much. I’ll have to sell everything

to raise the money to buy that pearl or buy that field.” But what would you think about a person who finds a treasure and then walks away from it? You find something that will forever change your life for the better in every way, but “I’ll pass. Thanks but no thanks.” Are they foolish? Lacking judgment? Crazy?

The reality is people hear the gospel, encounter Jesus and his offer of forgiveness of sins and salvation every day and still choose to walk away from his offer of grace. In his commentary on Matthew, James Boice wrote “Here is a person who sees the value of his discovery but decides, upon reflection, that it will be too much trouble to acquire the treasure for himself. He would have to adjust his priorities. He would have to sell his goods and change his lifestyle, and that would take time and effort. He might be misunderstood by his family or friends. True, the treasure would make him a rich man, but the changes required would be too difficult. We may imagine such a situation, but that is not the case with the ones described in these parables. These men determined to acquire the treasure or the pearl for themselves.” These two were determined to have what they found, the treasure and the pearl, regardless of the cost involved.

You’ll have to decide. The choice is before you. You won’t be forced into the kingdom or coerced. You won’t be tricked. Jesus invites you to weigh the cost, but one way or another, it will cost you everything.

The Kingdom is free to all but it is not without cost. The saving grace of God is unmerited favor and forgiveness. It cannot be earned, it can’t be bought or purchased. We could never come up with the purchase price. It is a free gift available to all who will come to Christ in repentance and faith. But it is not without cost.

The parables tell us both men went and sold everything they had in order to buy the field or the pearl. Coming to Jesus in repentance, coming to embrace and receive the kingdom of God, his rule and reign in your life, will cost you everything – everything that is that hinders you from gaining the prize of his love, his saving grace, his life. It will cost you everything that stands in the way of you coming to Jesus and receiving his welcome, his forgiveness, his embrace. It costs you everything that stands in the way of you making Jesus the Savior, Lord and King in your life.

What’s stopping you? What hinders you? That? Compared to the life he is offering you? That’s preventing you from coming to Jesus? Compared to eternal life, is anything worth that? You’ll give up Jesus and eternal life and heaven for that feeling, that high, that 15 minutes

of fame, that thirty minutes of pleasure, that person's affection, more likes on social media? Look where it leads you and leaves you! You never thought you would end up here. Look around. There is a treasure right here. Here is the pearl you've been looking for. It's worth the sacrifice! In his great hymn Martin Luther wrote, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also..." Let it go. Sell it all. Don't let anything keep you from Jesus, from receiving him as Savior and Lord. Nothing and no one can compare to eternal life in Christ.

It's personal and it's mine! Jesus said the man bought the field, bought the pearl. It was personal ownership. They actually had, actually possessed what they went after.

We talk about a personal relationship with Jesus. When we repent of our sins and ask Jesus to come into our heart and life, believing upon him as Savior and Lord, we have him and he has us. We enter into a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ. We have personal knowledge of him. We become one in Christ, one with Christ.

Salvation is personal. He died for you, rose again and ascended to heaven where he rules and reigns and he is inviting you into a personal relationship with himself. We aren't saved as a group. It's one by one as each person recognizes their need. Each one recognizes what's been missing and each one turns to Christ in repentance and faith and receives Jesus and his saving grace. It's treasure. It's THE PEARL. It is life, eternal, everlasting. It's the greatest choice you can ever make.

But there is one more parable remember. The fish and the net. What's the point and how does it fit with these other two parables? Remember I said "Jesus invites you to weigh the cost, but one way or another, it will cost you everything." Let me explain what I mean by that. You can choose to sell everything and surrender your life to Jesus, making him Savior and Lord. It may cost you everything in terms of your discipleship. You give up everything that has been keeping you from Jesus. You take up your cross and follow him in surrender and obedience. You die to yourself and you live in Christ, with Christ, for Christ and his kingdom.

Or you can ignore the gospel, reject Jesus and his salvation, hang on to all the stuff that we mentioned is keeping you from Jesus, but in the end, it'll still cost you everything. Everything you have, everything you are, in the end will be eternally lost and you'll be eternally separated from God. That's what this parable is warning us about. It's like the parable of the wheat and the tares. It's the end of the age and judgement is coming and Jesus issues a warning!

He reminds us again that the decision has to be made while there is time and opportunity because a day is coming when the net will be hauled in and division will come. Notice these final things.

You're either in or out. There was no middle ground, no straddling the fence. The fish were all in the lake together but suddenly the net is drawn and separation comes. There are only two categories, good or bad. Lost or saved. You may attend church every Sunday, you may swim in the same lake with all the other church folks, but it comes down to whether you have repented of your sins and you have a personal, saving relationship with Jesus. That's the determining factor. You're either in the kingdom or you're not; saved or not. When the end comes and the separation begins, you're either in or out.

The fish don't have a say. "Wait, I'm in the wrong basket. I wasn't that bad. I was better than a lot of the other fish." Good and bad wasn't determined by the fish, it was determined by the fisherman. Your opinion of yourself won't count because you aren't the judge. God the father has appointed Jesus as the righteous judge and he doesn't judge on the curve. He judges by God's standard and the bible says "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We've all sinned and failed. We've come up short of his law, his standard. What can we do? Repent and believe in Jesus, that he died on the cross for you, rose from the dead, ascended to the Father where he rules and reigns and he is coming again. Repent and ask for his forgiveness and mercy. Believe that if you call on him he will hear you and he'll save you and forgive you of your sin. He'll take away your sin and give you his righteousness, his right standing with the Father. That's how you find yourself in the basket marked good, saved. If you are without Jesus now, you'll be without him then. Eternity, heaven or hell, that gets decided now, not later. But on that day you won't have an excuse. Fish don't have a say.

It's permanent. Jesus said this is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous. There is no recount, no time to reconsider other options, no grace period then. It'll be too late. Once again, heaven and hell gets decided now but when that judgment and separation comes, it's permanent.

It's a dreadful end. Jesus doesn't mince words. It's a shocking end. "The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." You ask, "Do you really believe it will be a burning, flaming hell? Isn't that just figurative language?" Are you willing to risk it for eternity, that it's figurative? And if it's figurative, figurative for what? Could that make it any better?

From what Jesus tells us in the parables and from what he tells us in the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, hell is a place of separation from God, a place of torment and agony, and a place of remembering. Can you imagine the torment of being alone, without God, without hope, remembering the opportunities for salvation and life that you passed up? Why would I choose that or risk that when the treasure, the pearl of great price, the king and his kingdom, his saving rule and reign and grace are available today?

Jesus said, **“This is how it will be at the end of the age.” Matthew 13:49** No parable here. Jesus is stating a fact. His coming, his judgment, it’s a certainty. Then he asked them, “Have you understood all these things?” They answered “yes.” I can’t say if I understand all these things, but here is one thing I understand, one thing I know: There is a treasure beyond comprehension, A PEARL like no other. It’s Jesus and his kingdom, Jesus and his offer of forgiveness and salvation and grace and that offer is extended to us today. The closing words of the bible say “whoever will may come.” The bible says **“I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2** The invitation is for you, or you can choose to walk away. What will your choice be?