

Matthew 13:44
The Kingdom of Heaven is Like Treasure
July 5, 2020

Main Point: What is the kingdom of Heaven like? What can we compare it to? Jesus says it is like treasure. In this parable, Jesus is making the point that there can be treasure that is so valuable that it is worth selling everything else in order to possess it. This is what the kingdom of Heaven is like. I see 5 things about the kingdom of Heaven that Jesus is teaching us.

SI: This is a parable. What's a parable? The word means comparison. Setting something alongside in order to bring light to something that is not easily understood.

The kingdom of heaven. What is that? So Jesus gives a series of parables to help explain it.

Intro: Forrest Fenn lives in New Mexico. He's an antiques and art dealer, and sometime author. 10 years ago he wrote a memoir and included a poem that was a treasure map to a chest of treasures – gold coins, emeralds, rubies, diamonds – the press says it is worth about \$1 mil.

In early June, he announced that after 10 years, thousands of people searching, numerous people dying in various parts of the Rocky Mountain wilderness – announced it had been found. The treasure was an actual treasure box about the size of a shoebox. It had whatgold and jewels.

Maybe I was drawn to some non-Covid and non-protest news, but this caught my attention. A modern day treasure hunt. What? Somebody hid a treasure chest out in the woods somewhere, and then created a treasure map?

Historical explanation.

No such thing as safety deposit boxes or lockable storage facilities. People would bury their treasures. Or in times of war, to keep soldiers from looting, families would bury their treasures. And the owner of the treasure might be killed or not return for some reason. So the likelihood of finding lost treasure is not a fiction, but based in reality.

And then, what if you found this treasure in a field somehow? Is it yours? The legal position appears to have been that the finder was entitled to keep it (Morris, 359). But acquiring legal title was not always straightforward. For example, the owner of the field could argue that the treasure was not the finder's, but the owner's.

So the man went and sold all that he had in order to make it absolutely secure that the treasure would then belong to him.

Jesus, then, is making the point that there can be treasure that is so valuable that it is worth selling everything else in order to possess it.

5 things I see here about the kingdom of heaven that Jesus is teaching us

Findable

Irresistible

Expulsively Powerful

Irreversibly Costly

Expansively Joyful

1 Findable – Look at the first word Jesus gives about the kingdom of Heaven. It's like... treasure. The word perks your ears up. If there is treasure, then I want to find it. Everyone is searching for something that they think will be treasure to them.

But it's also easy to miss... There really is a treasure there, but it's hidden. Otherwise it would not be called treasure. Treasure is not something that is just out in the open, as easily acquirable as air.

Forrest Fenn received message after message from treasure seekers over the years seeking any hint of an additional clue. He didn't give any more hints, but he later said that some searchers were within 300 feet of the treasure but didn't find it.

Jesus is saying the treasure of the kingdom is findable. It may come upon you suddenly, even while you are doing something else – like this worker in the field. But when it does reveal itself, you are going to do something with it. What are you looking for? What have you found? What do you desire to have deep down? Where do you think you will find it? Jesus is saying that the kingdom is able to be found.

2 Irresistible (treasure) - The man who found the treasure is irresistibly drawn to it. He recognizes immediately that it is treasure. Treasure is something that, if acquired, if you possess it, if it becomes yours, will radically change your life for the better.

So what does the man do? What immediately changes in him? Look at his motives from the story. He recognizes the value immediately. He is most likely a poor man, likely a laborer in the field. He shrewdly covers it up. Jesus makes no judgment about whether or not he should have told the owner of the field – that is not the point of the parable. Don't get distracted. He is saying that the man immediately recognized how valuable this was. And then he took action to claim it for himself.

Story of friend in seminary who met a girl who had been dating someone for 6 years. Not engaged. He was drawn to her. She was drawn to him. He pursued her, took action, and now they've been married 20 something years. Do you remember what it was like to fall in love with your spouse? That you were drawn to her in an irresistible way? And what did you do? You somehow, some way communicated to her that you wanted to, you know, keep this going.

If the kingdom is irresistible treasure, then it will be

3 Expulsively Powerful (sells all that he has) Thomas Chalmers

The man goes and sells all that he has. Why? In his joy! So what has happened to him is that he has encountered and been completely changed by the expulsive power of a new affection. That is the title of a famous sermon by the 19th century Scottish pastor Thomas Chalmers.

Expulsion is the act of forcing out something.

So Chalmers here: "...how impossible it [is] for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it; and thus reduce itself to a [barren] wilderness. The heart is not so constituted; and the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one."

Jesus is accentuating the power of the something new. The expulsive power of a new affection.

For those of you into video games – haven't you seen this? When a new game comes out, the game you were playing loses out to the new one.

Many do not understand the power of the treasure of the kingdom of heaven, b/c it really isn't treasure to them! Fenn's treasure hunters knew the power... they gave up everything in order to go on the treasure hunt – you can find people who gave up their jobs in order to search for Fenn's treasure – and for years – b/c it was treasure that if found would radically change their lives for the better.

This is what the kingdom of heaven is like! It is so powerful that it chases away, drives away, consumes even all other loves. He went and sold all he had.

The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure. It is findable, irresistible, expulsively powerful, and **4 Irreversibly Costly**– (buys that field)

He invests everything he has in that field. He is all in, sold out, fully invested.

The folk singer David Wilcox has an old song called *Hold it up to the Light* that goes like this:
It's the choice of a lifetime - I'm almost sure
I will not live my life in between anymore...
[But] I was dead with deciding, afraid to choose
I was mourning the loss of the choices I'd lose

What's he getting at here? The costliness of choosing! Counting the cost of going all in for owning the kingdom of Heaven. Maybe some of you are there. Considering the cost of being sold out.

*You are listening to the lies of your flesh and the devil telling you that you will lose the opportunity to have all these other choices. Why can't I be a Christian and still have the things of the world? Please bring this question up from your heart! Please ask yourself this question! You are counting the cost.

You are asking yourself really how valuable is this treasure of the kingdom of Heaven to me? Is it worth giving up everything in order to have it?

Talk about how in American Evangelicalism faith has been one more add on to suburban lifestyle and can't bear up to the challenges of secularism b/c it is not all that costly to build. It's a house on sand.

So that's why we get to this last of all. Jesus says the reason the man gave up everything was for the joy of it. A new affection makes everything else like nothing to you. Having the treasure is joy enough forever.

5 Expansively Joyful /–

Jesus goes right to the motive- the most important part of the heart – we all do things for some reason, some motive is driving us. What do I want? What am I hoping to get?

And the kingdom of Heaven is like finding treasure and having it forever give you joy. See how it's expansive? It constantly grows. Otherwise, why sell everything? It's like sailing to a beautiful island, finding it has everything and then burning your ship. This is it. This is where we're staying forever.

It produces Joy - I'm in this for the joy of it, not b/c I'm right and I get to lord it over others how right I am and wrong you are. I've bought in, I've invested in this kingdom for the joy of it, the shocking joy of it. I can give up anything and I will give up anything in order to buy this treasure.

Jesus is motivating us with the joy of reward! The motive of reward, pleasure, satisfaction, meaning, acquiring, gratitude, awe, wonder, limitless, endless, expansive joy.

Why are you in?

*Self-denial is for joy! Dying to self is for joy! Going through the long process of selling all that you have is for joy! For the sake of joy, gladness. Some of you wonder why you're not happier. Why you have all these material things and comforts and can buy more if you want. B/c God never intended to give you joy through things. He has a whole other treasure that blows all that away.

Maybe the gold has grown dim.

How does it gain its gleam again? How does it become precious to us? This is key b/c even I am tempted to give you recipes for re-focusing, for de-cluttering, for re-organizing your life principles in order to find more joy. That is moralism. Moralism gives good principles that you can do on your own. Gospel-ism is about the joy of the kingdom that works at your heart level and chases away every other invader and robber of your joy.

So Jesus wants us to double down on the treasure. And finding joy in the treasure. If it really is treasure, value, worth, everything to you – then watch what happens – you don't have to try. The things you think are loss are actually not. They are gain. You are joyfully, eagerly willing to sell all you have in order to obtain what cannot be lost, on order to obtain only what can be given without your moral effort. The new affection changes everything.

So would you consider asking God to make the treasure of the kingdom more of a treasure for you?

Something deeper here that applies to us today. My identity is a 'treasure-finder.' No longer a treasure seeker. I am a treasure finder. Guy who found Forrest Fenn's treasure has remained anonymous. Very wise of him. Can you imagine how overrun this guy would be with interview requests and can I borrow a few dollars requests? He wants to maintain his identity as a treasure finder and not give in to the pressure of being a celebrity or to have his status be propped up or his joy robbed b/c he is famous for being the guy who finally found Fenn's treasure. His identity is not a treasure seeker, but a treasure finder and he will not have his joy robbed.

... For us > Once you have the kingdom, your identity is not in your race, ethnicity, status, class, or accomplishments.

This is why Paul says that in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave or free, Jew or Barbarian. The expulsive power of a new identity.

So, for example, in regards to the racial issues – Christians have power to give, to sacrifice, to empathize, to listen, to hold, to give up defensiveness, b/c we have everything we could ever possibly want or need in the treasure of the kingdom that is ours. So I can endure the pain of looking at whitewashed history and the pain of looking at my whiteness and my thoughts and feelings that I am better than simply b/c I am white. And I can listen deeply and with empathy to my black brothers and sisters who didn't and don't have the advantages I do and did. And it doesn't affect my status or worth or value or identity b/c my value, status, worth, and identity are not tied to my race, but to my King and His Kingdom of grace.

... And to probe just a bit deeper – I wonder if underneath some of white people's defensiveness is self-righteousness. Long time Christians know that the last thing to go is self-righteousness – that I am right, I am good, I have nothing to apologize for, I didn't contribute in any way to their choices or their pain and I resent any hint of responsibility!

But the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven powerfully expels all of that and replaces it with joy and awe in being known as the treasure of God.

Conc:

In Isaiah 49, God's people are discouraged. They say, Yahweh has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me. So God says: Even if a nursing mother forgets her own child, I will not forget you. I have engraved you on the palms of My Hands.

What is God saying? It is impossible for me to forget you. The palms, the inside of your hands are what you see constantly, the part of your body that is in front of you all the time.

You are my treasure. You are worth whatever it costs to have you. And Jesus would purchase you with His own blood, with nails in His Hands. With scars still there.

You are His treasure. You have been searched for, found, and bought! You are desirable. You are valuable, you are worth saving. You are seen. This kind of talk is almost embarrassing. Who me? I don't want to think of myself this way – I am nobody special. But you are.

All the searching for treasure ends when you discover that He has found you. "Oh what wonder, how amazing, Jesus the king of kings, deigns to call me His beloved, lets me rest beneath His wings." - All For Jesus