Last week the Lord led me to begin speaking to you about the subject of discipleship, which in the Greek means a follower & learner of Christ.

I’m pretty sure the reason He wants us to understand what discipleship is is because it’s the mission statement He gave to His church…

Not just New Beginnings Church of the Nazarene, but all of His churches… which aren’t the buildings, but the followers of Christ in various places of worship.

Matthew 22:37-39 & Matthew 28:19-20

Teaching others His truth by living it ourselves, being a Holy example of what Christ saves us from… and what He saves us for.

Last week we read the “terms and conditions” that Jesus laid down to a crowd of people who had recently decided they wanted to become His disciples in Mark 8:34

Do you remember what His “terms & conditions” were? There were only two…

Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow…

It may not sound like much, but when applied… WOW!!! The results are LIFE CHANGING!!! PRICELESS!!

The Holy Spirit leads one’s former self to die, because it was living in willful disobedience to God and His Word… and He raises the disciple to “new life” in Christ, that not only results in the giving of their own life to grow in knowledge & obedience to God’s Word, but through their example, teaches others to do the same… The net result increases the Kingdom of God throughout one’s life.

Why is this important? Because there are Scriptures that tell us that many people flocked to Jesus, not to die to their old life and become His disciple, but for some kind of personal benefit;

* To be fed at the loaves & fish potluck!
* To hang out with Jesus and hear this amazing man teach.
* To witness His miracles…, and yes, some even followed Him
* To confront Him and discredit Him. Matthew 12:22-24

But none of those things (certainly not the last one) demonstrate “giving one’s life for Jesus” as their Savior & Lord…

The late Presbyterian minister, Eugene Peterson, who’s Message translation of the Bible is often quoted in Christian churches around the world, said this about discipleship;

“Discipleship is anything that causes what is believed in the heart to have demonstrable consequences in daily life.”

William Barkley wrote; “it is possible to be a follower of Jesus without being a disciple;

* To be a camp follower without being a soldier of the king;
* To be a hanger-on in some great work without pulling one’s weight.”

Once someone was talking to a great scholar about a younger man. He said, “so and so tells me that he was one of your students.”

The teacher answered devastatingly, “He may have attended my lectures, but he was not one of my students.”

There is a world of difference between attending lectures and being a student.

Barclay went on to say; “It is one of the supreme handicaps of the church, that in the church there are so many distant followers of Jesus and so few disciples…”

Which is sad, because it’s in giving priority to learning and applying God’s Word, that one’s lifetime is filled with priceless, positive change, amazing love and endless blessing!

God led me to this passage today in Matthew 13:44 to help deepen our understanding of discipleship.

The title of the message today is “Buried Treasure”

Before we spend some time “digging” around in this verse, let’s look at the context…

* What are the names of the four Gospel writers in the Bible?
* What does the Word Gospel mean?
* And what was the “Good News”? Mark 1:15
* What is the Kingdom of Heaven like?

Matthew 13 is all about the “Kingdom of Heaven”.

V10-13 – Not everyone understands and becomes a reproducing disciple.

V24 – Man sowing good seed, but his enemy came and sowed weeds among the man’s wheat. Eventually the weeds were separated from the wheat and burned.

V31 – Something the dies, grows and becomes a blessing to many.

V33 – A woman thoroughly mixes yeast into 60 lbs of flour, which grows and ultimately blesses many.

V47 – A net that catches all kinds of fish. The good were put in baskets, the others were thrown away…

In all of these parables, Jesus reveals the “Kingdom of Heaven” as something that always has opposition, reproduces, increases and blesses many.

Matthew 13:44

Who on earth would bury treasure in a field?

The Jewish Historian Josephus stated that burying silver, gold, & other valuables in a field was a common practice back then.

Especially since they lived in a place where war was a frequent occurrence…, which meant stealing, looting and plundering their homes were very real possibilities.

So if word came that war was imminent, folks would rush out and bury their “good stuff” until it was over.

The Bible itself gives us clues that this was a common practice…

In Matthew 25:18, Jesus tells another parable about a man who entrusted his treasure to his servants. Remember that?

The first servant was given five bags of gold, the second two bags… and those servants “increased” their Master’s treasure,

but the third one (who was very timid & lazy in his approach to investing), buried it in the ground and produced nothing…

Things didn’t go so well for Him when the Master returned… He was more than unemployed.

Back to the man in Matthew 13:44

If the treasure was buried, how could the man have found it? It’s not likely that he was out with his metal detector that day… or that he was randomly digging…

It makes more sense that he was working for the owner of the field and found it while he was tilling up the ground.

So, while he’s working he finds it, hides it again and then sells everything he has to buy the field so the treasure will legitimately be his… Does that sound like the honest or ethical thing? Not in 2019…

Today we would say he should have told the owner of the field about it. But back then…

Jewish Rabbinic law said, “If a man finds scattered fruit or money, it belongs to the finder.”

Which is where we get our phrase: Finders keepers, losers weepers.

The man’s actions were lawful…, which was important for the Jews who were listening to Jesus… or they would have screamed “injustice”.

But did the treasure in the field really belong to the owner of the field?

If it did, he likely wouldn’t be selling the field! At least not without a buried treasure clause…

It’s pretty clear that the owner didn’t know the treasure was there.

It must have belonged to a previous owner who buried it and then died in battle, or some sort of household accident, or old age…

One never knows what’ll kind of household accident they may have… especially if they keep leaving their dirty clothes on the floor…

So it no more belonged to the original owner than it did the current owner. The man who found it had every right to claim it.

Consider this… if the man was dishonest… when he found the treasure what would he likely have done? Taken off with it!

He would have packed up his treasure and been long gone, and then buried it in his own field! Why go to all the trouble of buying the field?

You might be thinking, “Well, maybe his conscience bothered him…

Or maybe the land owner was his father-in-law or a relative.”

Well, I thought about that too… then I thought of a really good idea!!

Why wouldn’t he just take part of the treasure… sell it… and use the money he got from the sale to buy the field??!! Legally he could have… Obviously He didn’t.

He put it right back in the ground, never used any of it for the purchase, but instead sold every single thing he owned and bought the entire field. No unethical behavior. No one defrauded.

How much time did it take for the man to make his decision?

No time!! He didn’t even pray about it first.

How did he know exactly what the treasure was worth? I’m not sure he did… Something told Him it was worth much more than he had (or may ever have)!!

Today we might say the man acted by…? Faith! Hebrews 11:1

The point of the parable is… here is a man who found something that he believed to be so valuable that he sold everything that he had to get it.

Perhaps it sounds a little like; “deny yourself”, take up your cross & follow? Do you see Jesus as such a treasure?

19th century Rev. Thomas Guthrie once wrote regarding the value of the kingdom of God, and the value of Salvation in Christ.

“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.”

If you found such a treasure with endless blessings, what would you pay? As little as possible? ALL…?

The Apostle Paul responded this way - Philippians 3:7-9

How will you respond today?

God has made a priceless treasure available to us thru His Son Jesus Christ…

What is He worth to you?

He has entrusted you with His treasure… to grow His kingdom or shrink it… What will you do?