

What makes something a treasure? Usually we think of something that's treasured because perhaps it is old or scarce. Why were pennies all of a sudden the focus of our attention recently? Because they were not going to be produced anymore and surprising consequences have now made us aware of that decision. How about this: It's well known that one person's trash can be another person's treasure, so where is there a standard that you can find that will tell you for certain, this is valuable? What lunatic would just decide one day to hold up some random thing in his hand and start saying to everyone, this is the most precious thing in the whole world! What other lunatics would actually believe him? Maybe that's a possible job description for social media influencers...

When Jesus told His parables, sometimes they were stories that seemed pretty self-explanatory. He told the parables initially to the crowd, who either believed and followed Him, or refused to believe and remained in the dark about what Jesus was all about. His parables both revealed and concealed great truths. A few of the stories He explained Himself, to His followers, when the crowds had dispersed. Other parables take some time to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. The last three of Matthew 13, which we read in our Gospel today go fairly quickly compared to the other stories He's told, then our Lord concludes with a final comparison, not a parable, that emphasizes what Jesus' words do for us today. He reveals why we should apply His parables to our lives today.

In fact, that's where I want to start: Jesus said, "Every scribe who has been made a disciple for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who tosses out of his treasure new things and old." This should tell us that we can never be here in this space, listening from this pulpit, just so we will have more information in our heads. There's more going on here than my telling you something to do, or passing on mere Bible knowledge, as good as that certainly is. Instead we are here for a true interaction with our Lord and Savior, a back-and-forth that comes at His own invitation.

You are here to meet the source of your forgiveness and everlasting life Himself. From Jesus, the true Master of this house, you are to obtain not mere knowledge, but true wisdom with a goal, a point to it- you are witnessing God's kingdom coming here among you. You are finding out your part in this reign that you joined at your baptism. Treasures both new and old are being dished out to you, since the old promises have come eternally true in Jesus Christ and you are His beneficiaries. You belong to Him, and He belongs to you, forever.

That is the best answer to what can be a very confusing question: the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven as we read the title in this Gospel reading—is it something we seek out, like a man who found a treasure, sold everything and bought the field just to have the treasure? Or is it something Jesus did to seek us out, give up His life, His everything, sold out His utter perfection into the shame and suffering of the cross just to redeem us, to buy you back from your sin

and make you His treasured possession?
And the predictable answer to many
potentially confusing either-or questions that
we come up with is, it's both!

First, it is true that Jesus did everything in
order to secure you as His precious treasure.
It was for your sake that He came down
from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy
Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He
willingly put Himself under the law that He
laid down in the beginning, and brought it to
ultimate fulfillment. He not only kept every
rule perfectly, like you or I could never do,
He also allowed the law's punishment to
land only on Him, even though it had been
meant for you and all the human race.

Jesus your Lord sold all He had, as His own
parable describes, He emptied Himself to
gain you as His treasure, even though it was
well-hidden in the dirt of your sins and
failures, He went through all the effort that
was necessary to claim you. It was this great
effort that made you a treasure when nothing
else about you would have said you
deserved to be called that at all. It wasn't
because you had the traits or qualities of a
treasured possession, nothing of value
existed in your heart. But Jesus made sure
that nothing, neither height nor depth, death
nor life, would separate you from Him.

He cast the net that caught you like a fish,
you didn't have to make the effort to swim
and jump into His boat! Coming into His
kingdom by your own power was
impossible. He hauled you in, that's what
He gave the Holy Spirit to do in your heart,
that is, to give you the faith that trusted in all
that Jesus did for your sake. Aware of it or
not, believe it! You are God's precious,
chosen treasure, cleansed and forgiven in the
Blood of Jesus Christ.

Remember the answer I suggested to you,
whether the treasure of the kingdom of
heaven was something we seek out, or it is
Jesus who sought us? Well, now here's the
other side of that both-and answer. Once it is
clear in your mind and heart that you belong
to Jesus, no matter what, that He has washed
and redeemed you, given you the pure faith
in your heart to believe in Him, claimed you
as His own, then it is important to let you
know that He has also changed you. The
ugly sinner in you has died, was crucified
with Christ, and now what the Catechism
calls a new man shall daily emerge and arise
to live before God in righteousness and
purity forever. The tiny mustard seed grows
big! The insignificant teaspoon of yeast
turns out to make a whole barrel of flour
into light and airy bread! That means that
with the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, you are
different, great things are in store for you,
even in dark times when you don't feel
grace taking effect; that is to say, your love
for the Lord has been kindled, your desire to
serve Him and your neighbor totally
selflessly is renewed like it has never been
before. Your sins still try to tempt you and
plague you, but you have been given
mastery over them, thanks to Christ, who
has promised to forgive you.

This is what happens to you when you find
out what a massive spiritual treasure lies
hidden together with the free forgiveness
that you know you have already received.
There is so much more than forgiveness,
which is a wonderful gift in itself, you have
been set free. But then God wants to
increase your awareness of His love, He
wants to bring you closer and closer to Him
so that you are one with Him, joined
inseparably. He makes no demands in the
sense that He threatens taking away your
gift if you don't act right, He simply calls

you to follow Him because of the love that He has already placed in your heart.

Since Jesus went willingly to do all that He did to purchase you as His treasure, you respond in a similar way. You now willingly go and put your life on the line, making it your total goal and aim to serve others just as selflessly as Jesus served you. Along with Saint Paul, you also see nothing in this world that is better than this treasure.

“Whatsoever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of knowing Christ.” You know what is the highest priority in your life- it’s Jesus. You then go out of your way looking for opportunities to share His love that resides in you.

Yes, you do commit to your Lord your whole life and all you have as your offering to Him, not only because He commanded you to do this, but because now it is your heartfelt desire to sacrifice yourself for the sake of others. Long ago the wise words of God were recorded in Proverbs: “My Son, ... if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” It would bring you no greater joy in your life than to keep on seeking out this treasure, this Savior Jesus, whom you already have as your own.

Bad things and twists and turns will still be there in your life, you’re not going to get rid of that until Christ comes again in glory, but you now know for yourself what Paul wrote about: “All things work together for good for those who love God, that is the same as, those who are called according to His purpose.” Without Jesus going first and purchasing you, making you His treasure,

you would have no reason to believe that whatever you’re going through was ever going to work out for good. It seemed to be some random thing that made a believer and a treasure out of plain, old, you. Now that you know and believe that God had in mind to make you His own right from the very beginning of time, well, every moment you have when you listen to God’s Word, when you attend this Divine Service, when you remember you have been baptized and declared a child of the Heavenly Father, that’s when you know you are receiving precious treasures being tossed to you from Jesus’ storehouse, His treasure chest. I your local scribe and steward of the gifts of God, am happy to dispense these precious things, new and old, to you, for Christ has declared by His permanent command, they are yours.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.