

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Head of the House  
Matthew 13

Introduction

Back in 2018, a Michigan man learned that a rock he found 30 years earlier, and had been using as a door stop in his barn, was a meteorite worth over \$100,000

1. Sometimes we're like that man—we don't recognize the value or worth of something even though it's staring us right in the face
2. This is especially true when it comes to spiritual matters and is something Jesus addressed in the three parables we'll be discussing today

A. Context

1. This is our third week in Matthew 13 because it has the highest concentration of parables spoken by Jesus:
  - a. There are a total of 10 parables and the main theme that ties all of them together is that they are all about the kingdom of God
  - b. They can be broken down into three main categories:
    - 1) Parables about ENTRANCE into the kingdom like the parable of the sower (or soils)
    - 2) Parables about the GROWTH of the kingdom like the parables of the spontaneously growing seed, wheat and tares, mustard seed and leavened loaf, and the parable of the dragnet
    - 3) And finally, parables about the VALUE of the kingdom like the hidden treasure, pearl of great price, and the householder which we'll be covering today
2. When discussing or defining the kingdom of God it's a bit of a slippery beast:
  - a. In part, this is because it's an extremely broad theological concept:
    - 1) In a general sense, it includes God sovereignly ruling over everything in Creation
    - 2) In a more narrow and eschatological sense it includes things like the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ on earth, and after that God ruling over a new heavens and a new earth for all eternity
    - 3) There's also a spiritual element to it which might best be described as the realm of salvation where God rules in the hearts and minds of saved people
  - b. It is this third aspect that Jesus had in mind throughout Matthew 13 where He used kingdom of God to refer to the realm of salvation—in other words, kingdom of God here is synonymous with salvation:
    - 1) As we saw with the parable of the sower/soils, only those who respond with genuine faith and obedience to the Gospel can be saved—can enter into the kingdom of God
    - 2) The parables of the wheat and tares, the mustard seed and leavened bread, and dragnet illustrated how the kingdom of God grows—in other words, how the population of saved people grows over time
    - 3) The parables today have everything to do with what sort of value we place on the kingdom of God; in other words, what kind of value we place on salvation

3. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministry with the same message: repent because the kingdom of God was at hand (READ Matthew 3:1-3; 4:17):
  - a. The call to repentance indicates that the primary focus for both John and Jesus was the spiritual aspect of God's kingdom, that regarding salvation
  - b. In fact, Mark gave a fuller account of what Jesus preached (Mark 1:15): **"...the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel"** (the Gospel being the good news of salvation)
  - c. By the time we come to Matthew 13, we are at the mid-point of Jesus' earthly ministry, so He had spent at least a year and a half preaching about salvation and the kingdom of God, but much of it fell on deaf ears:
    - 1) According to Matthew 13:57, most of His hometown (Nazareth) was offended by Him
    - 2) According to John 6:66, many of those who considered themselves disciples **"withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore"**
    - 3) Opposition from the religious leaders had continued to grow
    - 4) As a result, Jesus' began to focus more on the twelve and those who truly were His disciples
    - 5) And, one of the topics He addressed here in Matthew 13 (and elsewhere) was the value of salvation and the cost associated with it by being His disciples

<b>B. The First Two Parables</b>
----------------------------------

1. The parable of the hidden treasure (READ 13:44):
  - a. The Great Kentucky Hoard:
    - 1) Back in 2023 a Kentucky farmer was walking through his recently plowed field and discovered a hoard of over 800 gold coins dating to the civil war
    - 2) The coins were minted in the 1860s and had a face value of about \$1200 which amounted to the annual salary of about nine soldiers
    - 3) They ultimately sold for over \$3 million!
    - 4) Coin experts suggest that the coins were likely buried by the owner because there was a huge mistrust of banks at the time:
      - a) There had been two sizable nationwide financial panics in recent years, one in 1837 and the other in 1857, with all kinds of banks failing
      - b) During the civil war, confederate raiders were also known to rob banks, especially in border states like Kentucky
      - c) So, many were afraid to put their money in banks, and whoever buried this hoard likely felt it was safer in the ground than anywhere else
  - b. Even though there was a well-established Roman banking system in Israel during the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and the fact that the temple also served as a bank, it was still fairly common for people to bury their money and valuables in the ground:
    - 1) In the ANE, when something of value was found on a property, even buried money like in this parable, it legally belonged to the owner of the property
    - 2) If someone other than the landowner found it and removed it, it was considered theft
    - 3) This likely explains why the man dug up the treasure, re-buried it in a new location in the field, and then bought the field
    - 4) As the legal owner of the field, the treasure now belonged to him

- c. We may question the scruples of this man, and some scholars and commentaries do, but that misses the point of the parable
  - d. The point of the parable is that the man found something of such great value that it not only caused him tremendous joy but he sold everything he had in order to acquire it
2. The parable of the pearl of great price (READ 13:45-46):
- a. In the ANE, pearls were referred to as the “Queen of Gems”:
    - 1) Unlike today, they didn’t have cultured pearls and you didn’t find them in every woman’s jewelry box
    - 2) Natural pearls were so rare and expensive that they were generally reserved for the uber wealthy
    - 3) A strand of matching pearls was even rarer and was some of the most expensive jewelry in the ANE
  - b. In this parable, Jesus describes a man who was “**seeking fine pearls**”:
    - 1) He is a “**merchant**” which means he was a businessman, likely someone who bought and sold pearls and possibly other precious stones
    - 2) He was specifically searching for pearls of a “**fine**” (or good quality)
    - 3) In his search, he discovers one pearl of “**great value**” (NASB)—Louw and Nida suggests this referred to a pearl of exceptionally fine characteristics
  - c. Just like the first parable, the focus of this parable is the fact that the man found a pearl of such exceptional quality and value that he sold everything he had in order to acquire it

#### C. The Lessons of the First Two Parables

1. I believe Jesus had two main lessons in mind with these parables:
- a. The first lesson is that genuine disciples recognize the incredible value and worth of God’s kingdom/salvation:
    - 1) This was lost on so many during Jesus’ day, and it’s lost on most people today
    - 2) Most are too interested in satisfying the desires of their flesh here and now, and in what the world has to offer, than to consider what comes next
    - 3) They are ignorant of the consequences of sin and the judgment that awaits them
    - 4) As a result, they don’t recognize the incredible and priceless gift of forgiveness and salvation that Jesus offers

It reminds me of when I almost threw out the water conditioner when we bought our house; I had no idea it was a \$10,000 water conditioner!
  - b. The second lesson is that genuine disciples understand the high cost associated with being a part of God’s kingdom:
    - 1) The Bible makes it clear that we are saved by grace through faith, which means that it’s a gift He gives to us freely; we don’t earn it or pay for it, because Jesus already did that on our behalf
    - 2) However, this doesn’t mean there’s no cost associated with it on our part:
      - a) In both of these parables, because the men recognize the immense value and worth of what they’ve found, that they are willing to give up everything to possess them

- b) It's no different with the kingdom of God because Jesus made it clear that only those who are willing to be like these two men will inherit the kingdom of God
  - c) We see no greater illustration of this than the contrast between the rich young ruler and the Apostles in Matthew 19:16-29 (READ)
- 3) The point of Matthew 19, and these two parables, is that the one who truly recognizes the value of being part of God's kingdom will be willing to give up anything and everything to be a part of it

#### D. The Third Parable

1. Dustin already covered the parable of the dragnet so we're going to jump over that and go to the final parable Jesus spoke at this time
2. It's the parable of the head of the house (READ 13:51-52):
  - a. Jesus concluded his teaching about the kingdom of God by asking the disciples if they understood what He just taught them:
    - 1) He wasn't asking them if they merely understood in a cognitive or intellectual sense
    - 2) There have been MANY, MANY times over the years when I've asked my kids the same question, and what I really meant was did the words that came out of my mouth resonate with you? Did they sink in? Are you going to take them to heart?
    - 3) That's what's implied here; Did they really, and truly understand and accept what He just taught them about how to enter the kingdom of God, how it grows, and its true value?
  - b. He then concludes with a parable where He compared a scribe who became a disciple to the head of a household:
    - 1) Why a scribe?
      - a) A scribe was an expert in God's Word—it was his job to study it, interpret it, and teach it
      - b) If anyone should have understood the kingdom of God and teach others about it, it SHOULD have been the scribes
      - c) But, the Gospels almost universally portray the scribes in Israel as opponents of Jesus, rejecting Him and His teaching
    - 2) However, Jesus said that any scribe who **"has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old"**:
      - a) For the scribe to have become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven indicates he understood and accepted what Jesus taught about the kingdom of God
      - b) Out of this treasure, the scribe would be able to bring out "things new and old" (likely a reference to being able to share not just what the Law taught about the kingdom of God, but what Jesus taught about it)
      - c) As such, he was just like the head of the house who would provide food and substance for his family out of his storehouse (the same word refers to treasure and storehouse), except he was responsible for spiritual nourishment of God's people out of his knowledge of the kingdom of God

#### E. The Lesson of the Third Parable

1. How this statement relates to the disciples is a bit puzzling until we look at what Jesus said when He rebuked the religious leaders in Matthew 23:34-38 (READ)
2. Notice that Jesus said He would send them prophets, wise men, and scribes—this was a reference to the Apostles and disciples who would continue to preach the Gospel and the kingdom of God after His ascension
3. They would become the new scribes, and would care and provide for God's people out of the treasure they had received

F. Takeaways
--------------

1. Genuine disciples are those who recognize the true value of the kingdom of God
2. Genuine disciples are those who are willing to give up everything to be part of the kingdom of God
3. Genuine disciples are those who share with others their knowledge of the kingdom of God