

8th Sunday after Pentecost
July 26th, 2020

“Accident or Divine providence?” (Matthew 13:52)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 13:44

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

Here ends our text.

Intro:

“It was an accident”, said the little girl as she wiped up the spill from her water cup. “Nobody is perfect”, she says with a sheepish grin. How true! What accidents have happened to you this week? Hopefully, none, but we can all look back over the years and remember some of the bumps, bruises and character-building moments. We see how our gracious God worked all things for good, as our comforting epistle reading tells us.

Not all accidents are a bad thing. A melted chocolate bar in your pocket might sound like a mess you wouldn’t like to clean up, but for Percy Spencer in 1946, it led him to an important discovery!

Percy was an engineer for the Raytheon Corporation, was working on a radar-related project. While testing a new vacuum tube, he discovered that a chocolate bar he had in his pocket melted more quickly than he would have expected.

He became intrigued and started experimenting by aiming the tube at other items, such as eggs and popcorn kernels. Spencer concluded that the heat the objects experienced was from the microwave energy.

Soon after, Raytheon filed a patent for the first microwave. The first “micro”wave weighed 750 pounds! What would our lives be like without this modern convenience? Maybe you warmed up a cup of coffee right before you began listening to this message.

We push a button and a minute or two later, we have a hot bowl of soup or a hot cup of tea!

Similar stories of accidental findings are associated with the discovery of Insulin, penicillin, pacemakers, x-rays, Teflon, superglue, corn flakes and something my daughter is glad for -playdoh. While the discoverers were not searching for these valued finds, God opened their eyes to see them so that they would be a blessing to many people!

In the first parable from our Gospel today, a man happened upon a hidden treasure. It was accidental, but the discoverer quickly understood the great value of his find. It was so precious to him that he quickly gave up everything that he had to purchase the land.

We focus on two thoughts this day from our text.

- I. First, the precious Gospel is not accidentally found but graciously revealed by God!
- II. Second, the precious Gospel is not shared by accident, but it is intentionally taught by our Lord and all His scribes, including you and me!

Jesus tells us this parable today to describe what is of inestimable worth for you and me – the Gospel of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus! Many people have walked by this precious treasure. Many people have not received its great joy. God wants all people to become rich in their souls by the discovery of this treasure! And when it happens, when God reveals it, and gives faith to see its incomparable beauty, then everything changes!

The treasure of the Gospel is so precious. A Christian values it above all things! In the parable, the man who discovered the treasure, with great joy, sold all he had to secure the property on which he had found the treasure. He did not want to lose it!

Listen to Paul compare his life before and after finding the treasure of the Gospel.

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;” (Philippians 3:7-9)

Rubbish. That's how Paul described his lack of righteousness before God, despising his pharisaical pedigree of unrighteousness by the law. But Paul was "found in Him". Jesus showed him the hidden treasure on the road to Damascus! Yes, the law pummels us with condemnation that all the sins you and I have committed could never be written off as mere accidents. We can't downplay them as momentary lapses of judgement on an off day. "I'm just human" is the well-worn phrase that people often use to excuse sinfulness.

But in our baptisms, we were "found in Him", given faith and the righteousness from God. We weren't an accident waiting to happen, but a lost sinner waiting to be found. And we were, thanks be to God!

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:4-6)

God found us, called us and united us through baptism into the one Christian faith! One Lord, one faith, and one baptism!

Again, in Colossians 2:13-14, Paul describes life without Christ as being dead. But, together with Him, we are made alive, forgiven of all our trespasses!

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

There are so many examples in the Bible of lost sinners who were revealed the treasure of the Gospel. The woman at the well came to fill her water pot and left filled with the water of life. Zacchaeus, a tax collector, who was rich by worldly standards, was still empty in his heart, so he climbed a tree to see who Jesus was. He was curious. But, Jesus wanted to do more than satisfy his curiosity.

"Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. (Luke 19:5-6)

"And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

When true riches are revealed, there is joy, much joy! With much joy the man who found the hidden treasure sold everything and bought the land. With much joy, Zacchaeus now possessed the greatest treasure. He gladly gave half of his possessions to the poor and restored anyone he had defrauded four-fold.

When a lost soul is found, it is no accident. It is only by the gracious seeking of the Son of Man. It is Jesus who plants the good wheat. For God is the Lord of the harvest.

From our epistle we see that it was no accident that you and I were revealed God's plan of salvation. It was the Lord's purpose to be called into His family in order to work His greatest good in our lives – eternal life and glory in heaven!

“28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified. That you have come to know Jesus Christ and His salvation, was no accident. It was divine providence!

III. The precious Gospel is not shared by accident, but it is intentionally taught by our Lord and all His scribes, including you and me!

Yes, God did it all. We couldn't make ourselves alive. We couldn't find the treasure. Saul was dead in his sin. Until, God in His great mercy found Saul on the road to Damascus. It was no accident. God stopped him in his tracks. God had a plan for Saul – to bear His name to others.

“Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (Acts 9:13-15)

So, Paul was baptized, spent time with the disciples at Damascus. He was taught, and then God's word says,

“Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.”

Paul describes what he was preaching as unsearchable riches in Ephesians 3.

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; (Ephesians 3:8-9)

The riches remain hidden, until a messenger sent by God reveals the mystery – the mystery of the fellowship in Christ through faith. Paul says similarly in Colossians 2.

“I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Colossians 2:25-28)

That’s the goal – to reveal the mystery of salvation. How does it happen? God wills it to happen when He makes known His riches of the glory. It’s no accident. God intentionally uses His servants to preach and teach all wisdom so that the treasure be received – Christ in you, the hope of glory, which makes a believer perfect in Christ Jesus. What a treasure! Yes, I’m human and share the sinful flesh with all humanity, but in Christ, I am presented perfect!

So, we read in Psalm 105 today.

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! 2 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!”

Make known! Talk! Sing! Intentionally proclaim, teach and reveal the greatest of treasures to those around you. It is the greatest gift you can give to another by the power of the Spirit - “Christ in you, the hope of glory!” People need to hear the Gospel before it’s too late. In God’s providence He has put each of us in our stations of life to reveal His hidden treasure to those around us.

Again, in today’s Gospel, Jesus repeats the message of the message of the coming separation of the believers from the unbelievers. Last week, Jesus called them wheat and weeds. Today, He calls them good fish and bad fish. A drag net catches them all on the last day. There is no escaping judgement. And the good fish are separated from the bad fish. The good fish are gathered into the vessels and the bad fish are thrown away. What

does it mean? The believers are gathered into heaven and the unbelievers are cast into the fiery furnace of hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus uses repetition to emphasize how disastrous this ending is for unbelievers.

To make sure that everyone understands the gravity of what Jesus said, He asks them,

“Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” 52 Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

It is vitally important that we understand all these things for the lives of lost sinners depend on it. We have been instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven. The treasure has been revealed to you and me! We are scribes - pastors and laymen alike – every scribe that has been taught the truth of the Bible. And wow, do we have something to bring out and show to the world – the treasure of salvation in Jesus Christ!

How many times have you visited a home and received the grand tour? As you go from room to room, you see the treasures that have been part of a family’s life – family heirlooms, passed down from generation to generation. Each has a beautiful story behind each item. Old treasures and new treasures fill up our family history. There are keepsakes and prized collections.

Now Jesus uses that same imagery to describe how you and I, the householder of the mysteries of God bring out the old and new treasures of His love in His precious word. What old beautiful memory verses have you treasured since childhood? What new ones have you learned that you would like to share with another? God’s word is eternal. His marvelous deeds are a treasure for every generation. We especially bring out the treasures of God’s word for our children to see! Oh, and how they love to hear the Bible stories that fill their hearts with God’s love and joy! God gives us new ways to share His love to those dead in their sins, whose unrighteousness because of our common sinful flesh is rubbish. In what new ways can you bring out God’s treasures?

The revealing of God’s kingdom is never by accident. It’s His divine gracious providence! God willed our salvation to be accomplished in Christ. And He predestined, called, justified and sanctified you! That’s our treasure right now in our possession! Salvation and the beautiful inheritance of heaven itself are yours through faith! It’s time to bring out these treasures and show them to the world, both old and new! Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Galatians 4:7)