

Christ: The Hidden Treasure

by Albert N. Martin

Edited transcript of [message](#) preached November 5, 2000

[More Transcripts](#)

Now may I encourage you to turn in your Bibles to the 13th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. And I shall read selected portions from this chapter. And I trust the rationale behind that selection will become clear as we move into the exposition of the last two verses. Verses 1-3a: "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And He spake many things unto them in parables...."

Verses 10-17:

"And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Verses 34-36:

"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field."

Verse 44:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Those of you who regularly attend this place of worship know that last Lord's Day morning I completed the consecutive expositions of the book of 1 Peter. I do have a desire that I trust will issue in practical performance to bring several summarizing messages on that letter that has become very precious to many of us. But due to the disruptions of vacations and weddings and the changing complexion of the congregation, I'll probably bring those gleanings on 1 Peter in the first few Lord's Day evenings in September. But this morning we're going to consider two of the parables that are found here in Matthew 13. As I've prayerfully reflected on how best to use these two Lord's Day mornings closest to the two weddings, my mind has been drawn to these two parables of our Lord Jesus, parables which I have been fascinated with for years but upon which I've never preached, never made any effort to expound them. Well, God willing, this morning and then next Lord's Day morning I will make an effort to open up and apply these two parables: the parable of the treasure hidden in the field and the parable of the pearl of great price.

Many of you would know that these two parables come in a context in which as Matthew records this aspect of the ministry of our Lord, he gathers together and opens up or records seven of the parables spoken by our Lord at this time. They are ordinarily called kingdom parables. And in them the great subject of the kingdom of God is central. In two of the parables, the sower and the soils and the sowing of the good seed and the bad seed, we have some indication of how the message of the kingdom is received. It is as seed sown. Some falls on good ground; some falls on not so good ground. And the kingdom advances as the message of the kingdom is proclaimed. And the response is along the lines of the differing soils described by our Lord. And then in the parable of the dragnet and possibly that of the wheat and the tares, our Lord is showing the mixed character of the kingdom and also the future purification of the kingdom. The tares will be gathered in bundles and cast into fire. And the bad fish that come up in the dragnet will be discarded, and the good fish gathered and brought into the kingdom in its future and consummate glory. And then in the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, we are taught something of the growth and the development of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, yet it grows into this tree which is able to become home to the birds of the air. And a little bit of leaven put into the flour effects the whole lump. Here we are taught something of the growth and development of the kingdom. And then in these two parables: the parable of the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price, our Lord is underscoring something of the preciousness of the kingdom for all who are brought into that kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure. And the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant seeking goodly pearls.

Now in any initial reading of the two parables, it is evident that in a real sense they are twins, not identical twins; they are fraternal twins. They have many things in common, though they are not identical twins. The common denominators are obvious. In both cases, a single object of supreme value is found. Look at your Bibles and see the language: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found...the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found...." There's one of the common denominators of both parables. In both cases, a single object of supreme value is found. A treasure is found; a goodly pearl is found. Furthermore, in both cases, the single object of supreme value is acquired at the price of the total liquidation of all other assets. Look at the text: "...which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that

field...when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." There's the second common denominator. In both cases, the single object of supreme value, whether the treasure or the pearl, is acquired at the price of the total liquidation of all other assets. Those are the two obvious common denominators in these parables.

And then there's one major factor of difference easily observed. In the first parable, the treasure is discovered unsought and unexpectedly. The text says, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found...." He found it. How he found it we don't know. We'll come to that in a moment when we try to grab hold of the basic facts of the parable. But in the parable of the hidden treasure, the man finds a treasure. He comes upon it unsought, unexpectedly. But in the parable of the pearl of great price, there is a merchant, we are told, seeking goodly pearls. This man's business is pearls. He thinks pearls, he eats pearls, he sleeps pearls. He's seeking goodly pearls. He's not one of these who's just trying to find some junk pearls and pass them off as good stuff. He's a serious pearl merchant. Now I've never met a serious pearl merchant except here in the text. But you see, there is a marked contrast. In conjunction with the treasure, it is found. In conjunction with that one pearl of great price, it comes in the course of a life taken up with pearls. Here's a man seeking goodly pearls, and in that pursuit, he comes upon this one pearl of great price.

Now before we're done considering the instruction which these two parables are meant to convey, we'll address the significance of both the common denominators and that fundamental distinction between the two parables. But at this time we take up verse 44. And I'm going to attempt to expound and apply this parable under this title: the hidden treasure: what is it? and have you found and acquired it? And I want to press the rationale for that title. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like...." In other words, wherever the dynamics of the kingdom of heaven are operative, whenever someone is born of the Spirit and seeks and enters the kingdom, whenever the King of grace conquers one of His subjects and brings them into the kingdom of grace and power, what is said of this man who found a treasure will be true of every single individual who gets into the kingdom. And according to my Bible, you're either in the kingdom of grace and power, or you're in the kingdom of darkness and death that will lead to hell. And I want us to come to this parable, not with an innocent curiosity alone (what does it mean?), but with a felt sense of the tremendous personal interest each of us has in this parable. If you are not the man who's found a treasure, you're not in the kingdom. No place for idle curiosity or even mere innocent curiosity (What does it mean?) No, I'm preaching this morning on the hidden treasure--what is it?--and with a passionate desire that you answer honestly this question: have you found and acquired it? That's the thing to which our text points. Having found it, he hid it, sold all that he had and bought the field in which the treasure was buried. The hidden treasure: what is it? and have you found and acquired it?

Alright, we begin then under our first heading: the basic facts of the parable explained. Our Lord in these parables takes the stuff of events and circumstances and commodities that would be well known by those of His own day. And for many of us, we've got to put ourselves back there and seek to get into their mindset. And when our Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field," He was not talking about something that would be foreign to their knowledge

and to their experience. Think of what it would be like before the days of a local bank where you could go down to rent a safe deposit box to put your valuables.

I remember back in 1974, I think it was, we came into a little bit of money from one of our relatives. And I received some counsel that I ought to put a little bit of it into gold. So I bought eight Mexican--I forgot what they were--gold coins at the time, I think, when gold was about \$250 an ounce. I invested \$2,000 in gold, and there it's been sitting since 1974 and isn't worth much more than that now. I'd like to go to the person who gave me that counsel. But be that as it may, I was able to take these valuable coins and put them in a safe deposit box, and I don't think have opened sometimes for years on end, except when I want an illustration. Then I bring them out.

But remember, back then there were no local banks with safe deposit boxes. Nor did they have heavy, thick, steal-lined safes that you could purchase and keep somewhere in your basement that weighed 500 pounds and put your valuables in there. If you had something very valuable, it was not unusual to take that commodity, whatever it was (coins, jewelry) and to put it in a substantial, thick wooden box and bury it in some obscure place. Some who have studied the times of our Lord said that wealthy men would be advised to split up their assets like that into three major divisions, and one of them would be buried. Well, apparently what happened in this case is someone had valuables called a treasure. (And this is the standard word used for treasure. The wise men came and "opened their treasures"--same word. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but...treasures in heaven.") And a man put his treasures in a box and buried it.

And then Jesus tells us that a man found it. Who was the man? He's undesignated. Whose field was it? It's undesignated. What was he doing in that field? We don't know. It just says, "which a man found." Now he may have been a hired hand to the man who owned the field who may have been a distance relative to the one who put the treasure in the field. The Lord doesn't give us all these details. Now, whether he was following behind his mule that was drawing the plow, and he heard the plow bite into something substantial, and he told the mule to stop, we don't know. One thing we know, he didn't own it. He found the treasure; he opens up the box and sees there's real substantial treasure. Once he discovers it, he looks over this way and that way, as he wants to make sure no one else is privy to his discovery, and he then hid it. He either buries it in the same place. Or perhaps feeling that if people see the dirt disturbed around there, they might get suspicious and come and dig around it, so he may have looked this way and that way to find some other place. All we are told is: after discovering the hidden treasure, he himself hides it. And he hides it with a view to doing something.

Look at the text--and the words of our Lord Jesus are very precise: "...and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." A very strange construction. When the Lord says, "for joy," it means trauma from the very posture and out of the context. I don't know if this person had a garage sell. I don't know if he advertised in the local paper or went to the local supermarket where they pin announcements and said, "Everything for sale, cheap, first bidder, first come, first serve." I don't know, but one thing is clear: he was whistling all the while he was selling. It says in his joy he goes and he sells. So you can't think of him saying, "I've got a treasure there in the field, but man O man, I've had this particular set of tools, this particular set of golf clubs, and I've got this clock that was given to me by my

great grandfather--boy, I don't know if the treasure's worth it." No, it says in his joy he goes; in his joy he sells. And he comes whistling up to the walk of the owner and says, "You know that field over there? I want it." It doesn't tell us whether they dickered, whether they bargained, whether he had to give every last cent he had--I don't know. All it says is that he sold all he had and he struck a bargain. And that day when he walked away, he had title to the field.

Now then, having ascertained the basic facts of the parable, what is the central truth of the parable? "The kingdom of heaven is like...." And in what does the central likeness consist? And you don't say, "Was it right for him to hide the treasure once he found it? What about the ethics of what he did?" Forget it. It has nothing to do with the central truth of the parable. You don't get locked up in all the little details and say, "This and that must have significance." No, "the kingdom of heaven is like...." In some ways, it's like a sower who goes out to sow. The parable doesn't tell you everything about the kingdom you need to know. But it does tell you how the kingdom is advanced by sowing the seed of the Word. It tells you that it will meet with a different reception. Some will receive it like hard packed wayside soil, some like shallow rocky soil, some like thorny soil, and some like good soil. Is that the only and the extensive teaching on the kingdom? No, it teaches certain aspects of the truth of the kingdom. Well, likewise, when our Lord is committed to underscore the preciousness of the kingdom and how it becomes precious to all the subjects of the kingdom, He is not giving us an exhaustive, comprehensive dissertation of the whole Biblical doctrine of the preciousness of the kingdom to all who enter the kingdom. He is highlighting certain aspects of it.

And what is the central truth of this parable? Well, certainly we can say with confidence what it is not. Certainly, our Lord is not teaching that the message and blessings of the kingdom of grace ought to be hidden from men. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field; therefore, let's hide the message and only give it to those who come and ask for it. No, in this very chapter, it is said that when Jesus saw the multitudes, He didn't retire. He got into a boat, pushed out from the land and preached to them. So the message of the kingdom is not to be hidden. Jesus said make disciples of all the nations. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). I have a divine warrant to stand here this morning and declare God's treasure chest of grace in Christ and say in Him there is forgiveness, reconciliation, pardon, adoption, the gift of the Spirit, the pledge of eternal life. It is all there treasured up in Christ. And He is there for you if you will have Him.

Certainly, the message of the parable is not that the blessings of the kingdom of grace ought to be hidden from men. Nor is it that the blessings of the kingdom can be purchased by the currency of our own works. It says that he sold all that he had and bought the field, so he paid for the treasure. The treasure was the reward of his payment. Therefore, if we bring enough shekels, God will give us the blessings of the kingdom and all that is in Christ the King. No, that would contradict this very chapter again. When Jesus is telling His own disciples why the parables conceal truth from the multitudes and reveal truth to His own, He says in verse 11, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." It is given unto you, not because you are more clever, not because you have something of worth which you presented to God and purchased this privilege. It is given. Philippians 1:29: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for His sake." The first Beatitude: "Blessed are the

poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The first thing God does to a sinner is strip him and bring him to the place where he realizes he has nothing, can do nothing, and can conjure up nothing to present to God as the reason why he ought to be pardoned and forgiven and taken into God's kingdom as one of His cleansed and forgiven subjects. No, the central truth of the parable has nothing whatsoever to do with any notion that the message of the kingdom ought to be hidden, that we can, by some currency of our own works, earn the blessings of the kingdom.

It is true that, as with all the parables, there is a central, dominate, all-embracing truth illustrated. And the crucial issue in understanding it is having at least a little understanding of what Jesus meant when He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like...." What is the kingdom of heaven? Now some have asserted that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are two different things. Folks, I don't mean to be unkind if there's anyone sitting here who has believed that, but that is sheer unbiblical nonsense. In a passage such as Matthew 19:23-24, Jesus uses the terms interchangeably in the very same context. In speaking of the rich young ruler, as we generally describe him, Jesus said to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Jesus uses the terms interchangeably. And when you study certain passages in Matthew and see their parallels in Mark and Luke where Matthew says, "kingdom of heaven" (and for good and wise reasons, which we'll not go into), Mark and Luke will say, "Kingdom of God." Kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are one and the same kingdom. And when we turn to our Bibles, we realize that whatever the kingdom of God is, the dominate emphasis in the New Testament is that the kingdom comes when the King Himself comes.

Look at Matthew 3:1-2: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And how did the kingdom of heaven come to be at hand? Because the King Himself was now going to present Himself in His public ministry. Shortly thereafter, Jesus is baptized, and we read in chapter 4, verse 17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is at hand in the presence and Person and work of the King of grace, the Lord Jesus. And so when He commissions the twelve, He says,

"That's what you're to go out and preach. I'm giving you power to cast out demons, heal the sick, and raise the dead. And these are to be validations that the King has come in regal power to invade the kingdom of darkness with which sickness and demonic possession and death are associated. You go in My authority and in My power. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons. And this is what you are to preach...."

Matthew 10:7-8: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." You see the sense of what the kingdom is. The King has come. We come in His name and in His authority. The kingdom of darkness is going to yield before the King who has come to establish His kingdom. And then when the seventy are sent out, you find the same emphasis in Luke 10:8-9. And when we come to the book of Acts when Paul summarized his preaching, he summarizes it as the preaching of the kingdom. Look at Acts 20 for our final verse. Paul summarizes three and a half years of ministry

among the Ephesians and tells them the disposition in which he served the Lord.
Verse 20:

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."

When Paul preached repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus, when he testified the Gospel of the grace of God, he was preaching the kingdom. The kingdom has come in the person of the King and all of God's gracious disposition toward sinners in that King of grace, the Lord Jesus. And that's not an exhaustive description of the Biblical doctrine of the kingdom. I must only touch on this basic element that we might feel the weight of this parable.

Now with this understanding that the kingdom of heaven is the rule of God in grace and power connected with the Person and through the work of the Lord Jesus, what is the central truth of our parable? "The kingdom of heaven is like...." When the rule and reign of grace in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus comes to terminate upon a man, upon a woman, upon a boy, upon a girl, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." I believe with all my heart this is the central teaching of the parable. You might express it in different words. I claim no divine inspiration for the words that I use. But words like this similar to them that capture the essence of it--here is the central truth of the parable: the discovery of the great worth of Christ and the salvation that is in Him will always cause a sinner to joyfully dispense with anything and everything that would keep him from possessing Christ and the salvation that is offered to us in Him.

Now let's see if that fits the parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field." The treasure is Christ and all that is stored up for sinners in Christ, the King of grace. And as far as this man is concerned, the field is useless. It has no more worth than a means to earn his living, however he was using it, until he discovers the treasure. The discovery of the great worth of Christ and the salvation that is in Christ--what will it do? It says, "...and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." When the sinner discovers the beauty and the worth and the treasures of grace in Christ, he is ready in the joy of that discovery to dispense with anything and everything that would keep him from possessing Christ and the salvation offered in Him. This man may have had deep, long-term emotional ties to an old grandfather's clock in his living room. But once he got enamored with the treasure, away with grandpa's clock. He may have had rings from a grandmother and a great-grandmother of great value, that before he discovered the treasure in the field, he might periodically sit down and look at his assets and the things that had tremendous emotional and historical significance in the family lines. They were precious to him until he found something more precious. Then out they went in the first garage sale. Isn't that what the text says? In his joy--don't miss that--he goes and

sells all that he has. He wants the field because the treasure's in the field, and he knows he can't have the treasure without the field. Nothing is important now but the field in which the treasure's found.

That's the way the kingdom comes. It comes to us who, as sinners, have a thousand idols in our hearts to which we are bound with deep ties of affection. For some, it's sensual pleasure. For others, it's aesthetic pleasure. For others, it's the pleasure of being number one, putting others down, being first on the block. For others, it's this or that. And we have a thousand ties to a thousand things. And we walk by the field in which the treasure is found and count it a thing of no worth until the Spirit of God through the Word discloses to us the loveliness of Christ and the desirability of salvation in Christ. For the joy of that discovery, there is nothing that is not expendable. In his joy, he goes; he sells, and he buys. Jesus says the kingdom is like this. So if the kingdom has come to you, and if the kingdom has come to me, we have come to the discovery of the great worth of Christ and the salvation that is in Him. And it has caused us joyfully to dispense with anything and everything that would keep us from possessing Him and the salvation that is in Him. If that's not true of you, you're not in the kingdom. You say, "That's very narrow." Call Jesus narrow, for He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like...." Wherever it comes, whenever it comes, to whomever it comes, the kingdom of heaven is like this.

God has given us a very vivid illustration of this in a particular man. And if my definition of the heart of the meaning of this parable is accurate, then surely the analogy of Scripture will support it. I want you to turn to Philippians 3. I'm going to read the account of a man who tells you all that he had to which he had great ties of affection sentimentally, religiously. And he's going to tell us how, upon a certain discovery, he was ready to relinquish it all that he might have the treasure. Verses 1-9:

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. [These Judeaizers wanted to get all the gentiles circumcised and become kosher Jews. Paul very ineloquently calls them knife wielders--not very flattering. He hadn't gone to a user-friendly seminar.] For we are the circumcision [the true covenant people of God], which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more [if anyone thinks he has the stuff with which to purchase grace, to purchase God's favor and God's salvation, I've got a better stock than he does]: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me [these things were gain to Paul at one time. These were the treasures in his house. He had lots of them. He said, 'You think you've got some, I had more. These things were gain to me. I was tied to them with affection and trust and pride. They were my salvation. They were the significance of my life. These were the things that I lived for and was ready to die for. Now, what happened?], those I counted loss for Christ. [What did he discover that made the difference?] Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness [the blessing of

a justifying righteousness], which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Paul does not separate gaining the Person and gaining the privileges. They are inseparable in God's salvation. You can't snatch at the privileges while being indifferent to the Person. There's a man who found a treasure in a field. And most of the commentators are careful to point out, he illustrates very vividly that area of difference. He was not like the pearl merchant seeking goodly pearls. He was out seeking Christians to commit them to prisons and to death. And God said, "Enough." There was a blinding light above the brightness of the noonday Syrian sun; there was a voice out of heaven, and the treasure was there before him. He said, "When I saw the worth of the treasure, for joy, I sold all that I had. I count it but a pile of dung." What was his gain is now a pile of dung. Why? Because the Holy Spirit showed him the beauty and the loveliness of Christ and all the gracious salvation that is in Him. "The kingdom of heaven is like...." Paul is the great example.

The negative example is that wretched young man of Matthew 19. Look at the contrast. He comes to Jesus and he seems to be a merchant seeking goodly pearls. Verses 16-23:

"And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect [complete], go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me."

What did Jesus offer him? He offered him treasure in heaven and His own companionship. He said, "Get rid of what you have and give to the poor. Don't put it in long term bearing CDs hoping you'll eventually go back--no, no. Don't sign it over in your will. You give it right now, and then you'll have treasure in heaven. And follow Me." What is the Lord doing? He's seeing--has this man been brought to the place where he's really discovered the treasure? He comes as a man who has great ties to his present treasures: his morality, his uprightness, his reputation, his influence--all these things--and at the head of the list is the money and all it can give him, all it has given him, all it could continue to give him. And the Lord Jesus is saying,

"You've come and called me good master. And I'm more than that. I'm God incarnate. I'm the King of grace, and eternal life is bound up in Me. Do you want Me? Have you seen in Me a treasure above the treasures that are there in your bank accounts, above the treasures in your titles to land, possessions, and property? If you have, you will with joy go and sell all that you have. And having a treasure that cannot be touched in heaven to come and Me as your companion now, it will be a no-brainer."

But what happened to him? Look at the passage: "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." He still saw his treasure in the things that he could touch and feel and fondle and turn into cash and influence. He didn't see Christ as the treasure hidden in the field, for whom he ought

joyfully to get rid of all his toys that he might have eternal life in Christ. And the text says, "He went away sorrowful." Why? Because he didn't see the worth of the treasure. And Jesus didn't run down the road and say,

"Excuse me, young man, you know, I was really going for broke. I was hoping to get you both saved and surrendered with one big whack of the soul. I missed it, but look, if you're willing to believe I'm the Son of God and came from heaven to die for sinners, you'll be saved and go to heaven when you die. And hopefully down the road you'll learn to love Me enough, and you'll surrender to My Lordship."

No, no, Jesus did not butcher his soul by that wretched teaching. Jesus wasn't playing games with him. He said, "What shall I do to have eternal life?" And Jesus said, "Eternal life is in Me. I'm the treasure. Do you see in Me the treasure? Then get rid of your toys. Come, follow Me, and there will be eternal treasure in heaven."

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field." We go by Christ day after day. We go over Him, around Him, and we see nothing beautiful. But when the Spirit of God through the Word of God opens up the loveliness of Jesus and the fact that all the salvation we need and could desire is in Him, then for joy of that discovery, we sell all that we might have the field and the treasure that is in it.

Now having sought to open up the basic facts of the parable and the central truths of the parable, I want to close by making two crucial applications of the parable. The first is this: the parable exposes as utterly false the notion that some of the blessings of the salvation of Christ can be had without having Christ Himself on His terms. We can somehow sneak up on the box in the field and grab a goodie or two without getting rid of the toys in our home that we might buy the field in which the treasure's found. No, impossible. This takes all kinds of wretched faces in our day where people write books trying to show you can take Jesus as Savior and have your sins forgiven and be ready to die and go to heaven while you have never bowed to Christ as your Lord and as your Master. You can believe on the Lord Jesus but not be a disciple to Him. You can be saved but not fundamentally surrendered. You can be a true Christian but not a holy man or woman. That is all forms of saying you can have some blessings that are in Christ without having Christ Himself on His terms. There is no more wretched, destructive lie than that lie because it incases people in a false security. "O yes, I believe in Jesus. He's the Son of God who came from heaven and died for sinners. I'm trusting in what He did on the cross to take away my sins." My friend, you have never seen any beauty or loveliness in Christ that's caused you for joy to throw open the whole soul and being of who and what you are and embrace Him to be to you all He promises to be to sinners who trust Him and receive Him on His terms. You see how the parable exposes this notion as false.

The treasure's in the field. The man had to sell all he had to get the field. And he got the field on the owner's terms, not his own. No evidence that he bargained. No evidence that he was struggling--"Well, I've got to give up my boat. No, I've found the treasure; everything I have is expendable for the sake of the treasure." My Bible says, "God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." All of God's salvation and all of its glorious facets are stored up in Christ: forgiveness, reconciliation, justification, the gift of the Spirit, the promise of eternal life, adoption. All of them are in Christ. And Christ comes to us in the Gospel as the treasure. And He says, "You want Me? If you want Me on my terms, you have everything that is in Me." What are His terms? "If any man come to Me, and hate not

his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" Christ's terms are that you've seen in Him a loveliness, a beauty, a desirability through the preaching, teaching, and reading of the Word of God, good books--whatever means God is pleased to use. You've discovered Him to be the treasure, and you haven't dickered with Him. Like Saul of Tarsus when he discovered the treasure, he didn't pray a long prayer in that initial discovery; it just was, "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus." He says, "What will you have me to do?" Saul of Tarsus up till now has made the plans, set the agenda: "From here on, Lord Jesus, I'm Yours."

Some of you kids who are struggling, this is the real issue. You deny nothing you've heard about Christ. But if you're honest, you have to say, "There's an awful lot I haven't tasted in this world, and it still looks so attractive to me; it still looks so desirable. I'm not sure if I want to come into my adult years never having known a rib-crushing embrace from a young man and a passionate kiss on my lips and perhaps never to have it if God doesn't give it to me in a marriage partner." You've not settled that. You really think you might miss something in Christ if you never know what it is to have a rib-crushing, passionate embrace. You go right down the line: to have this, to have that, to experience this, to experience that.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field [present tense verb to make it live before us]." We see the man whistling all the way as he disposes of goods, comes with his bag full of money, whistling up to the owner's walk. You don't know anything of that. And that's why you're so miserable. Your conscience has been conditioned not to be comfortable in crass worldliness, but you've not discovered a beauty in Christ that has captivated you and makes Him precious and makes a life of obedience a delight. You're of all people most miserable. That's the problem with some of you. And if you're honest, you'll say, "Pastor, now I don't know why God led you to take this to anybody else, but that's my problem." And I plead with you, own it, face it--that's the issue. You need to cry to God that He would, by His Spirit, do what Paul says He does whenever He brings someone in the kingdom.

2 Corinthians 4 is another passage that is an excellent commentary on this parable. Paul says, "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The devil doesn't want a Gospel that radiates the beauty and the loveliness and the glory of Christ to break upon your soul. Paul says, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Paul says, "It wasn't the light in the Syrian sky that was the instrument of my conversion. It was the light shed upon my darkened heart. And when the light broke in, it illuminated the face of Jesus, and I've never been the same." That's it, and that's what you need. You need to cry to God that He would, by His Spirit through the Word, make Christ the treasure discovered in His beauty.

Many years ago, I heard an Indonesian preacher, and in his broken English, he was preaching on this theme out of the experience of Abraham. And he said, "God says, 'go,' and heart don't want go. But when I see Him, heart go." His words came back to me in my preparation at my desk yesterday. This parable exposes as utterly false the notion that some of the blessings of the salvation of Christ can be had without having Christ on His terms.

And my second application is this: this parable exposes as utterly false the notion that to possess Christ on His terms is to consign oneself to a joyless life. The passage is clear. And I confess, and so often happens for those of us who preach the Word would acknowledge, there are things we pass over again and again until we have to preach on the passage. And I never saw how pivotal is this little phrase "and for joy." For the joy thereof he goes, he sells, he buys. That's it, dear friends. God does not deliver us from our soul-damning idols to make us a bunch of sorrowful, doleful, wretched creatures. He delivers us to bring us into the joy that we were meant to know as creatures in fellowship with the living God. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking," Paul says, "but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

I hope some of us who have been in the way awhile are a constant refutation of this lie of the devil to you young people. You see your life before you; you see all your options. And you see the self-denial; you see the strict terms of following Christ closely in a world that is hostile. And you see your parents; you hear their acknowledgement of the struggles with sin. And the devil would love to come along and say, "Is that what you want for your life--this joyless, struggle, wrestle existence?" I hope that some of us are a living monument that that's a bunch of bunk. I hope you see in us, amidst our struggles and our acknowledged wrestlings and the rest, a joy and a vibrancy that you know is rooted in Christ and the things we have in Him. And in your heart of hearts, you know it isn't fake. You know it's real. It's yours if you will have the treasure. It's there in the field. Sell all and buy it. There it is available. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

Isn't it interesting that the program that has knocked the charts into all kinds of disarray is Regis' "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" It's amazed people. And now several other stations have come up with imitations of it. What lies behind all this obsession? Millions of people, night after night, sit there watching "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" What lies behind that? It's the lie that the treasure's in dollars and what dollars can procure. We've got a nation that's bought the lie. That's why the lottery is so popular. "If I can hit the lottery--what's at the end of that lottery; hitting the right number is the pot of gold." No, my friend, the treasure is not to be found on Regis' show or in a local store that sells the lottery ticket. Christ is the treasure and all that your soul will ever need to be right with God now and to be filled with all you can handle now and to look forward that the best is yet to come. It's in Christ. O my friend, go to Him. Cry that God will enable you to see that in Christ are hidden all the treasures, Paul says, of wisdom, knowledge, pardon, forgiveness, fulfillment, direction, purpose--name it, it's in Him.

I come around full circle to where I began. The hidden treasure--what is it and have you acquired it? No one can acquire it for you, kids. Mom and Dad can't. In their prayers, they would, but they can't. You personally must acquire it. Have you

acquired it? If not, why not? And if not, when? "Behold, now is the day of salvation. Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart."

www.eternallifeministries.org