

SERMON : 8TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST 2020 (*Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52*)

MAY the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. <Amen>

Rich or poor, young or old, everybody has a treasure! We all have something that we hold very special. Our treasures take many different forms with either real value like money in the bank or sentimental value like grandmother's broken brooch - trash for someone else but treasure for us. Treasures may include a new pet, a bike or a long awaited drivers license. Our treasure may be the family land and home or a person that we love very dearly. These are some of the treasures of our lives.

Treasure, then, is really a matter of perspective. What matters is the eye of the beholder.

The parables in today's gospel lesson complete the series of parables in Matthew 13 and on which we have been reflecting recently. In these final parables our Lord talks to us about treasure and His kingdom.

Today we are presented with a collection of parables of the kingdom of heaven. These parables do not describe the kingdom in a systematic way, but show us a series of snapshots taken from different perspectives. No single picture is definitive, but each provides a glimpse that adds to our understanding.

These are parables of the Kingdom - each including the words, "the Kingdom of Heaven is like."

"Kingdom of Heaven" is synonymous with "Kingdom of God." Matthew uses the former out of a respect for the holiness of God's name.

There is a pairing among these parables:

- The Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast contrast small beginnings with their great effects, emphasising the power of God's action. They are addressed to the crowds.
- The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl have to do with objects of great value which spark great commitment. They are addressed to the disciples.
- The Parable of the Net and the Parable of the Weeds (vv. 24-30—last week's Gospel reading) emphasise the present openness of the kingdom to all who would enter.

Today, what I would like to focus on in these final parables is Jesus talking to us about treasure and His kingdom. First he tells us about a man who finds a treasure hidden in a field. Having found the treasure he goes and joyfully sells all that he has and purchases the field so that he may obtain the treasure for himself. The second parable is like it. A pearl merchant looking for fine pearls finds a pearl of great value, he too sells all that he has and purchases the pearl.

As we consider the treasures of God's kingdom I want to look at what is treasured from two perspectives. First, what is treasured by us; and second, what is treasured by God?

Treasured by Us

Make no mistake, we have been abundantly blessed with treasure from God. These blessings are in plain view for all to see. Look at where we live. Most of us enjoy life and health, a place to live and food to eat and someone that loves us. We have so much more than this. All are treasures given to us by God.

We also enjoy treasures from God, which cannot be seen, like treasure hidden in a field. As these treasures are hidden from our eyes we may not think about or prize them as much as our visible treasures. What are these treasures? They are righteousness, pardon from sin and peace with God and eternal life - all that is spiritually priceless.

Most of all our treasure is Christ, through whom we possess all the treasures of God. In Christ is the treasure of God's love poured out on the cross in His blood, which is more precious than gold or silver.

Why does this latter treasure seem so unappreciated by so many and how do we find it? We are really like the man who stumbles over the hidden treasure buried in the field. The needs and the desires of human life and the priorities of this may life blind us. People can be blinded by what they see, thinking that which is seen is most important. In that blindness they bumble around in the light of the day not recognising spiritual poverty, evil behaviour, separation from God and their desperate need for a Saviour. **But, by God's grace we recognise our need and find real treasure in Christ.**

BY GRACE ... IT IS ALWAYS BY GRACE ... that we find the treasures of God's kingdom. God must open our eyes of faith to see the treasure that is laid before us. The treasures of righteousness, forgiveness and eternal life are spiritual and can only be seen by people who are spiritual, having been born again by water and the spirit. Through God's Word He gives us the eyes and ears of faith to possess the treasure found in Christ.

Through Christ and in God's time (not our time I hasten to add) the treasures of His kingdom will come be treasured by us.

Treasured by God

What is it that is treasured by God? One might be inclined to think that God treasures lives of sacrifice in return for the many blessings that He has given. One might think that He would treasure a holy and God-fearing life. A person can imagine many possible ways to please God. But are these the things that God really treasures?

The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it in His joy went and sold all that He had and bought the field.

In this parable we are told what God treasures. **God Treasures you.** You see, God so loved the field of the world because in it He found His treasure ... you. Yes ... YOU!

For YOU He sent His only Son who sold all that he had, giving up His glory and majesty, being born of a woman, suffering and dying to purchase YOU from sin death and the power of evil, not with gold or silver but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death, that YOU may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

There is simply no price that we could ever pay to possess the treasures of God's kingdom.

Having once lost us to sin, God values YOU so greatly that He pays the price to buy YOU back again.

God in His grace sent His Son to do that which we could not do.

Jesus is OUR priceless treasure.

<PAUSE>

Rich or poor, young or old, everybody has a treasure. We all have something that we hold very special. Our treasures take many different forms with either real or sentimental value.

Yet, there is only one treasure that will last forever. Jesus is our priceless treasure. In Him the Lord holds us special.

We can be secure knowing that in Jesus, our priceless treasure, God treasures us.

I runga e te Ingoa o te Atua, te Matua, te Tama me te Wairua Tapu.
In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit <AMINE>