

Sunday 15-May-22

The Response to the Kingdom...

Isaiah 55:1-13

Invitation to the Thirsty

55 "Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;

and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendour."

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the LORD.

⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow
 come down from heaven,
 and do not return to it
 without watering the earth
 and making it bud and flourish,
 so that it yields seed for the Sower and bread for the eater,

¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
 It will not return to me empty,
 but will accomplish what I desire
 and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

¹² You will go out in joy
 and be led forth in peace;
 the mountains and hills
 will burst into song before you,
 and all the trees of the field
 will clap their hands.

¹³ Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,
 and instead of briers the myrtle will grow.
 This will be for the LORD's renown,
 for an everlasting sign,
 that will endure forever."

Matthew 13:44-52

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net

⁴⁷ "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked.

"Yes," they replied.

⁵² He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

Sermon: Response to the Kingdom

It would be great to have your Bibles opened to **Matthew Chapter 13** beginning at verse 44

Let me **ask God for His wisdom and understanding first...**

Let's pray...

Context/Intro (Treasures?)

For the past couple of weeks, we have been **looking at Jesus' parables**

A parable is: ***an earthly story with a heavenly meaning*** – a story that illustrates some truth about God, about Jesus and about the Kingdom of Heaven

[Slide 1 – Kingdom of Heaven is like]



Jesus has been using **parables** to describe what the **Kingdom of Heaven** is like.

But the Kingdom of Heaven also **requires** a **response**.

But before we get to the response

Let's begin with a **question?**

What do you **treasure** in life?

In our **Bible Study/ Growth Groups** this week – here's some of the answers we shared:

Our treasures were: *Our Husband or Wife; our children, grandchildren, family, friends, our pets, church family, roof over our head, our health, heirlooms; possessions; hobbies; sporting interests; the groups we are involved in.*

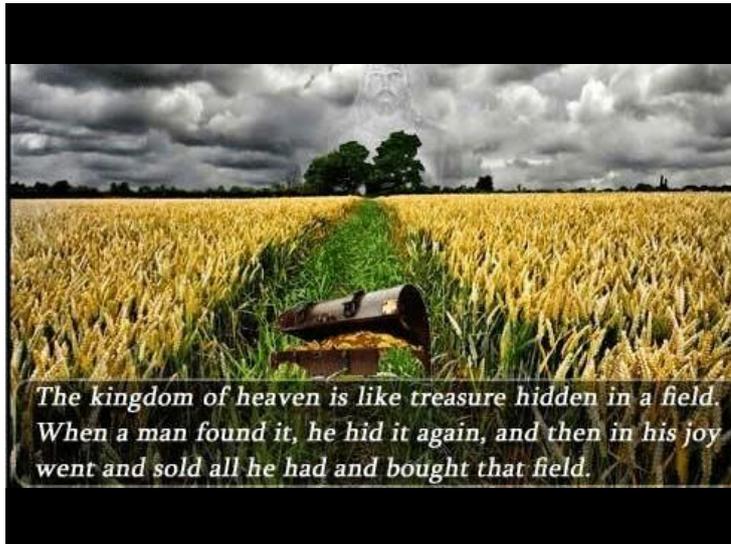
Perhaps we can **spend** – **one minute** – writing them down?

(pause)

In our passage today – Jesus continues with **three more parables** that describe what the Kingdom of Heaven is like – and as we said last week – **Jesus tells us the WHAT about the Kingdom** – and He wants us to work out the **WHY** – so we can **respond**

The Kingdom of Heaven is like hidden treasure (Matt 13:44)

[Slide 2-Treasure]



The **first parable** is in v44 – Jesus says “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Picture the man walking through a field and **stumbling across a treasure chest** sticking up out of the ground.

In Jewish culture – it was **quite common for people to bury valuables** – in case the land was **invaded** - or in case they had to **go away for a while** – they would **bury their valuables to keep them safe** (no banks!)

According to the law of the day – **anything found** in the field **belonged** to the **owner** of the **field**.

The **man really really wants the treasure he found**; so, he **hides it again**; goes and **sells all he has** – so he **can buy the field**. The idea being once he owns the field – he **owns everything in it** – including this treasure chest.

Once he owns the land, he is full of joy – because he has the hidden treasure.

Jesus’ parable shows how valuable the Kingdom of Heaven is – it is the **most valuable treasure**.

The **parable** has two points:

First - This parable speaks of **how highly the King values the people of His Kingdom**. In fact - the King – **King Jesus** - valued His Kingdom so much - **He died for it**.

Second – Jesus wants us to see - being part of His kingdom - is the most valuable possession we can have - The parable illustrates the **whole hearted response that the Kingdom of Heaven requires**. No sacrifice is too great, and no other concern must stand in the way of it. That is true of Jesus as He lays down His life for the Kingdom; and it is true of the response required from us; the Kingdom must be our treasure – and nothing should stand in our way to be part of the Kingdom.

Application:

Do we see our relationship with Jesus - and - being part of His Kingdom - as the most valuable treasure we have?

Even more valuable than the treasures we listed earlier?

We might need to do some re-evaluating this morning – what do we have to let go of or give up – to make Jesus and being part of His Kingdom our most valuable treasure?

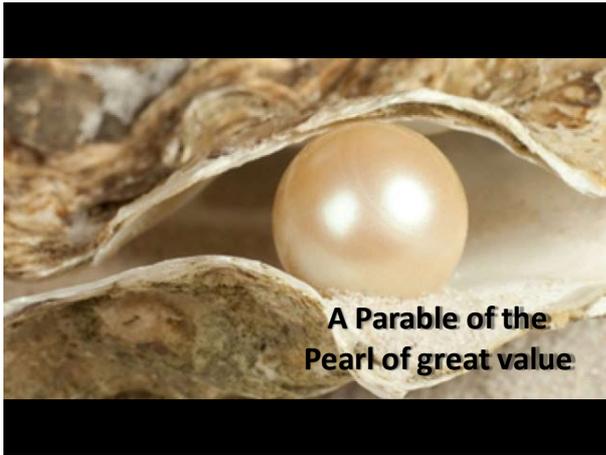
Are there things in our lives which are stopping us from – reading God’s Word, praying, worshipping God at church, something stopping us from joining in bible study?

But note it is not a “negative” “giving up” but a “positive” one – the man who sold everything to buy the field – was full of joy!

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl of great value (Matt 13:45-46)

The **second parable** in v45-46 is very similar to the parable of the treasure in the field

[Slide 3-Pearl]



Jesus says in v45-46 - “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

So here we have a **merchant** looking for pearls

In the culture of the day – pearls were worth a lot more than we see them worth today.

The **merchant comes across a pearl of great value** – and he **sold everything to buy it.**

In the culture of the day, a pearl was the loveliest of all possessions; that means that a place in the Kingdom of Heaven is the loveliest thing we can possess. (Barclay)

Again, there’s two points to the parable:

First – Jesus - like the merchant – **sees how valuable each person is** – **He is willing to give all he has for us to be part of His Kingdom** – it even costs Him His life – so we could be part of His Kingdom

Second – the **parable** is a **picture of King Jesus and His Kingdom** and the response we should have. Like there are other pearls in the market; there are other things in our lives of value. But nothing is to compare with our pearl of great value, that is King Jesus

and **the Kingdom of Heaven**. This is how some people find the Kingdom of Heaven; they try others faiths - or walk their own way without Jesus - or get sucked in by the fine things of this world (wealth, possessions, entertainment, career, education etc.) but one day they find the loveliest “pearl” in the world, King Jesus and His Kingdom.

An example of this is **Justin Martyr (100-165 AD)**, he was **fascinated by philosophy** from an early age, **he studied philosophy at the libraries of Alexandria and Ephesus**. One day he met an old man who told him about Jesus; Justin immediately started reading the Scriptures and he became a joyful Christian – and let go of his fascination for philosophy.

Application:

For us – maybe we’ve spent our lives searching for “pearls” – like romance, love, sex, entertainment, careers, education, different religions and different philosophies – and we’ve found some real “pearls”.

But Jesus is saying – believing in Him and gaining a place in His Kingdom – is the best pearl of all

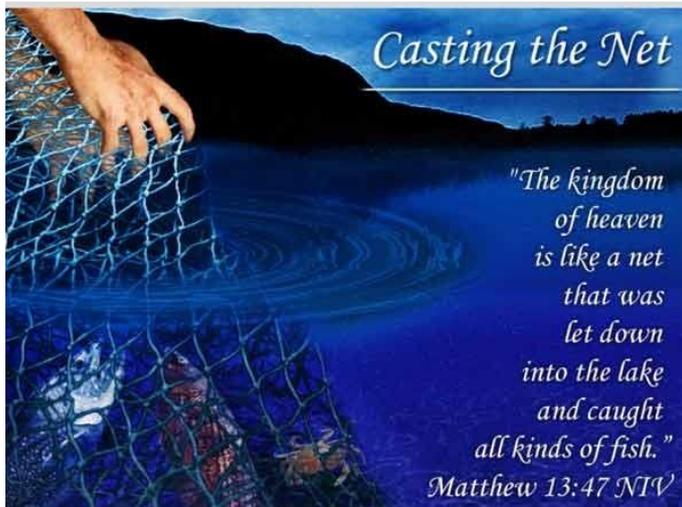
Why? Because all the other pearls of this world are temporary. But Jesus offers us a pearl that lasts into eternity – by believing in His death on the cross – we have our sins permanently forgiven – and by believing in His resurrection from the dead – 3 days after His death, we have eternal life – a life that lasts forever in Heaven – where there are no more problems and suffering like we have in this life on Earth.

So let us all grab hold of this “pearl” of the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus offers – and cling to Jesus as our treasured possession.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net catching fish (Matt 13:47-50)

The **third parable** in vv47-50 is very **similar** to **parable** we had **last week** –the **parable** of the **wheat and the weeds** (vv24-30).

[Slide 4-Net]



Jesus perhaps told the parable – about a **fishing net** – so that fishermen can relate to it – whereas the similar parable about **the wheat and the weeds** – was so that farm workers could relate to it?

In vv47-50 – **Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like a big fishing net** (or dragnet) which is thrown in a lake and catches all sorts of fish. When the fishermen dragged the net in – they found **both good fish and bad fish.** They kept the good fish in baskets and threw away the bad fish.

The parable is about judgment and separation. Within the church we will always find good and bad, real and unreal. Just like the parable of the weeds taught us - not to expect a pure world or a pure church on earth - and that we can't necessarily judge who are Christians and who are not; the parable of the net – says the same thing – **the day**

will come when Jesus will return to judge all things and He will make this final judgment and separation.

A good example of the net with the good and bad fish - **would be the 12 Apostles.** In the twelve - there was one bad fish – Judas – but none of the other 11 apostles realized Judas was a bad fish – he appeared to be a good fish.

Application:

The Judgment of real/unreal believers is up to God not us.

We are also called to persevere until the end – and be careful not to be tempted away from Jesus and His Kingdom. As the **Apostle Paul** says in 1 Cor 10:12 - *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*

Our Response? (Matt 13:51-52 and Isaiah 55:1-13)

There we have it – 3 more parables about the Kingdom of Heaven

Have we understood these parables?

That's the question Jesus asked His disciples in **v51**

They of course – **replied** “Yes”?

Can we reply “Yes”?

Why is it important for the disciples - and us - to understand what Jesus is teaching here?

[Slide 5a-Response-Job to do]

It's important for the disciples - and - for us - because they - and us - have a job to do.

Later on, in Matthew 28 – Jesus says this: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”*

It's going to be difficult for the disciples - and us - to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey Jesus; if they - and us - do not understand what Jesus is saying!

Jesus goes on to **explain** (with a fourth little parable) what the disciples - and our response - should be – if they -and - we - really understand Jesus’ teaching

See **v52** – He says: *“Therefore, every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”*

The main idea is that the **disciples** – who had just claimed to understand what Jesus taught – are **now responsible** to **take** their understanding to others, as if they were distributing from the storeroom of their wisdom and understanding. This storeroom contains both new and old treasures – **new and old treasures** about God and His Kingdom.

It’s like Jesus is saying to them: *“After you have been instructed by me, you have the knowledge, not only of the things you used to know, but of things you never knew before, and even the knowledge which you had before is illuminated by what I have told to you.”* (Barclay)

The disciples - and - us - are to be for the Kingdom of Heaven - what the teachers of the law (the scribes) were for Israel; that is – **be able to teach others the way of God.** The parable of the houseowner challenges them - and us - to fulfil this responsibility.

So how are we going to be able to be like “the teachers of the law” of Israel?

Well - we can be - if we understand something about an important treasure that we have in our possession. Which brings us to **our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 55:1-13** – **Please turn there now!**

[Slide 5b-God’s Word]

In vv1-5 - **God** through the prophet Isaiah **invites people to come to Him and treasure something of the utmost importance** – the **most valuable possession** (the **pearl**) that they can possess – and it's actually free – it won't cost them a cent

That **most valuable possession** (pearl) is **God's Word** – and just like people need **physical** food – they also need **spiritual** food – by **feeding from God's Word**. By feeding from God's Word – people will find out about God's everlasting promise, to have an everlasting Kingdom – which was promised to King David and finds its fulfilment in King Jesus. **But are we treasuring God's Word and feeding off it? Can we see that **God's Word is a Treasure Chest of great value?****

[Slide 5c-Seek Him]

In vv6-7 - **God encourages people to seek Him whilst He can be found** - otherwise like the parable of the weeds and the parable of the dragnet; a time is coming when judgement will take place – and if people haven't got a faith in Jesus when judgment comes – **it will be too late** – and they will be like the weeds thrown in the furnace and like the bad fish thrown out!

Just like the parable of the treasure and fine pearl teaches - there was nothing so valuable as that treasure and that pearl– so Isaiah says (in vv8-9) - **there is no treasure – and no pearl - like God** – His ways are higher than our ways – and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. **Nothing is impossible for Him!**

[Slide 5d-Peace and Joy]

Then in vv10- 13 - God promises His Word – proclaimed in the Kingdom – **will always achieve His purposes and will not return to Him empty**. And so just like in the parable of the treasure when the man was full of joy when he bought the field with the treasure

in it; Isaiah says **once someone has God's Word and understands it** (like Matthew 13:51) **they will go out in joy and be led forth in peace.**

We - have a responsibility as disciples of Jesus - to **join the dots** of the **Old and New Testament** and **teach others** - so they can see the value of the treasure of King Jesus and His Kingdom.

Can we see the importance of understanding God's Word and its power?

The man who found the treasure - and - the merchant who found the pearl of great value – were **almost greedy in their desire to have that treasure and to have that pearl.** We must hunger and thirst (be almost greedy) **for righteousness** (desiring to be right with God, approved by God and to be like Jesus) and we must not hunger and thirst (be greedy) **for riches and wealth and possessions.**

Will we make that our hearts desire this morning?

Conclusion

One final thought

[Slide 6-Conclusion]

When we looked at **Matthew's Gospel last year**

And we looked at the **Sermon on the Mount** – (greatest sermon of all time – by the way)

Jesus told us things like:

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled. (Matt 5:6)**

Jesus told us:

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt 6:19-21)
³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matt 6:33)

Jesus told us:

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Matt 7:24)

It’s like **Jesus** – spends the rest of His ministry explaining and demonstrating the truths from His Sermon on the Mount.

We can only get to understand what Jesus is teaching - by eating and drinking His word – it’s so important for us to do that – because - **we are Jesus’ instruments for the Kingdom of Heaven to advance.**

Let’s pray...

Father God, thank you that being part of your Kingdom is the most valuable treasure we can possess. Thank you that Jesus invites us to be part of your Kingdom – and thank you that He treasured us so much - He died for us – to be saved for Heaven. Thank you for the treasure chest of your word – which transforms people’s lives. Help us to value your word as the best treasure we can have. Help us to understand your word so we can teach others about Jesus. Help us to cling to Jesus – our pearl of great value!

In His name, we pray, AMEN.