



Thy Kingdom Come: More Precious Than We Know Matthew 13: 44-46

It was 1980 in Australia. Kevin Hillier was out in a field with his metal detector. As he swung the pad back and forth over the ground, his meter pegged and the alarm screamed in his headphones. Another piece of metal junk someone had dumped out in the field. He almost ignored it. No chunk of metal that big could possibly be worth anything. But just to be thorough, he pulled out his knife to probe. When he jammed it into the ground, it hit something hard...but the tip of the knife seemed to penetrate into it. Definitely not a piece of junk iron.

So, he started digging...and this was what he found. The largest solid gold nugget ever discovered. 62 pounds; the size of a baby. Worth \$1 million. **First question**...and call it out: What did Hillier feel when he made that discovery? **Second question**: If that was **you** who made this discovery in someone else's field, what would you do? Maybe the same thing as the farmer in our parable. (Read)

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. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."*

Question: What three words are the key to these two parables? **Look at verse 44:** "...in his joy." In Jesus' time there were no such things as banks. If people managed to save a little extra money, they would often bury it in a field. A worker was plowing in that field...a field that did not belong to him...and dug up a store of treasure. So what did he do? He buried the treasure again (I'll bet he marked the spot carefully), went to nearest pawn shop, sold everything he had, and bought that field. Pretty much the same thing happened with the pearl merchant. He discovers the pearl of a lifetime and joyfully sells everything he has in order to buy it.

Do you know what I wanted to do with this sermon? What thousands of other preachers have done? Ask you what is most precious to you. Ask if you would be willing to part with that in order to obtain the gospel. And if you aren't, why not? **That was my plan.** And then... I actually **read** the parable, and I realized that I had it exactly backwards! So help your biblically illiterate pastor here, will you? Which came first: the finding, or the selling? The finding. And what did the finding produce in the finder? Joy! Filled with joy at this unbelievable discovery, the two finders were **then** willing to sell everything in order to obtain what they couldn't live without.

The order is important. If I told you, "I want you to sell everything and finance an expedition to find buried treasure," you'd think I was nuts. "Sell everything and go on a worldwide search for the most precious pearl you can find." Insane. But if you **discovered** buried treasure...if you **found** the most precious pearl in the world... would I have to persuade you? Nope. You would happily—**joyfully**—sell all that is precious in order to obtain that which is most precious.

This treasure...this pearl...this kingdom is precious **because** there is no better way to live, no more fruitful, joyful, productive, powerful, significant way to live, than to live God's way through the grace of his son, Jesus. You can be married the way you want, raise your family the way you want, pursue your career the way you want, spend your money the way you want, spend your time the way you want...but when you discover God's way to be married and raise your family and pursue your career and spend your money and spend your time, you discover how much better...how **precious** life can really be. More precious than anything. And worth everything.

So **is** all of this precious to you? **Have** you discovered the joy of being a part of God's mission and living God's way? If you do not love generously or serve generously or give generously—if you hold yourself cautiously in reserve rather than spending yourself extravagantly—it might be because you've never found this joy. Because you've never discovered what a treasure...what a precious treasure...kingdom life really is.

Ah, but the first time you catch a glimpse of that precious pearl, it reorders everything. It's why one man who made his first trip to Mexico said, when we were done, "I'm coming back...and I'm bringing my entire office with me." It's why another man made a clandestine trip to the Tijuana Home Depot—we aren't supposed to leave the job site—to buy \$200 worth of paint and supplies so that a little girl's new room would be more beautiful for her. It's why a man who gratefully received Christ on one of our men's retreats called me to his death bed recently to tell me that he was leaving the church one-fifth of his estate. Because when you discover the preciousness of what Jesus has done for you, the joy that results longs to be generous with wealth and time and service and witness. It can't help itself.

So if you **don't** feel compelled to give yourself away for the sake of Jesus, maybe you don't really have the joy of Jesus. And honestly, there's nothing I can do to fabricate that in you. **But the odds of finding a pearl are better if you are hanging out with oysters.** Joining a mission team to Mexico or Cambodia or the Tacoma streets. Joining a LifeGroup of people who are digging for treasure in God's word. Volunteering to teach or serve children. Having friends whose marriages run Jesus' way. A family centered on Jesus and Jesus' people. That's where the digging is good—good digging for us, our spouses, our kids, our neighbors . . . and people we don't even know.

Or maybe it will start with a prayer this morning as you come to the table. "Jesus...help me to realize how precious this meal is. Help me to treasure the price you paid to save me—your broken body; your shed blood. Surprise me with the joy of discovering your grace...a joy that compels me to pour myself out to you in gratitude; to give myself away for you and find everything that matters."

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1-Review the parables in Matthew 13. What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from each of these parables. (This will take some time but it is important; don't rush!)

2-Read our short text. What is common between these two one verse parables?

3-Have you ever saved up your money to buy something that was particularly precious to you? Describe it. Where is it today? How does that experience illustrate what Jesus is saying here?

4-In what way is the kingdom "precious" to you? Honestly, now...where does it fall in the list of other precious things in your life? If it matters to you, how do you "cause" something to become more precious to you? Is it even possible to do so with kingdom matters? What one thing could you do to accomplish this?