

July 28, 2002 (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost [A]

Matthew 13:44-46 [NIrV translation]

[Jesus said] "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that was hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again. He was very happy. So he went and sold everything he had. And he bought (buy) that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a trader who was looking for fine pearls. He found one that was very valuable. so he went away and sold everything he had. And he bought (buy) that pearl."

[The Gospel lesson continues to verse 52.]

Jesus loved to tell stories. His stories have a meaning for our lives. Sometimes Jesus explained His stories. Sometimes not.

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus told THREE stories - but he gave explained only ONE.

The first and second story seem to mean the same. But what do those two stories mean? Jesus did not say.

The first story:

A man works, digging. The man is working for someone else. The field is not his. But while he digs, he finds a box. He pulls it out. He opens the box. Surprise! Treasure!

Can he keep this treasure? No. The box and the treasure belong with the field. Who owns the field? That person also owns the box and the treasure.

Following the law, the only way the worker can keep that treasure is how? If he buys the field, the treasure will belong to him.

Jesus said: The man put the treasure box back in the ground - he buries the box. Then the man goes and **sells everything he has, collects all his money, and buys the field.** Now the worker owns the field **and the treasure.** Both are his.

The story means what?

The worker means who?

The treasure means what?

But wait. Jesus has a second story.

A business man buys and sells PEARLS. He finds one very beautiful pearl. It has value. The man does not have enough money to buy that pearl. He does what?

Same as the worker in the first story, the business man goes and **sells everything he has, collects all his money, and buys the pearl.** Now the pearl is his.

Again, the story means what?

The business man means who?

The pearl means what?

Jesus did not say. He leaves the story open for us to think. Same as our stories for the past two weeks, Jesus said these stories are about "the Kingdom of Heaven." These stories talk about our relationship (belong) with God.

Bible teachers give two different ideas about both these stories.

The first idea:

The worker and the business man = us, people.

The treasure and pearl = life forever with God.

The treasure and pearl = our relationship (belong) with God.

Maybe the treasure and pearl = Jesus!

When we belong to God, we disconnect from all other gods.

When we give our lives to God,

we don't give Him 50%,

we don't give Him only Sunday mornings,

we don't give Him a dollar for the offering.

Jesus says that if we follow him, we give-up **everything** the world offers us, and we give God 100%. Everything in our lives belongs to Him.

Jesus said, *"If anyone comes to me... you must give up everything you have. If you don't, you cannot be My disciple."* (Luke 14:26, 33)

Jesus said, *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And anyone who does not pick up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. If anyone finds his life, he will lose it. If anyone loses his life because of me, he will find it."* (Matthew 10:37-39)

The Bible says, *"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you... The world and its evil desires are passing away. But those who do what God wants them to do live forever."* (1 John 2:15, 17)

The men in today's stories gave up everything they had for the better treasure. Also for us.

If we compare:

[everything the world gives us] and [Jesus],
how do they compare?

[The world's riches are worthless] and [Jesus is precious].

That is one way to explain the two stories. But we have **another idea**.

Remember that in the both stories, the men **bought** the treasure and **bought** the pearl.

Can we "buy" Jesus?
Can we pay God for heaven?
Can we earn His love?
No,
No,
No!

The Bible clearly teaches that we can never pay our debt to God.

The Bible says: *"God's grace has saved you [through] your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it."* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"God has saved us. He has chosen us to live a holy life. It wasn't because of anything we have done. It was because of his own purpose and grace." (2 Timothy 1:9)

"Here is how God has shown his love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Therefore, maybe in the two stories,
The men - the worker and the businessman = Jesus
The treasure and pearl = us!

The businessman seeks a pearl with high value, the same as Jesus looked for us.

Both men our stories gave up everything they had to buy their treasure, the same as Jesus gave-up His place in heaven for us, and Jesus gave up His life for us.

In our stories, the treasure and the pearl did nothing to belong to the men. The two men did everything. It is the same for us and Jesus. We did nothing to belong to Jesus. He did everything to get us.

The Bible says, *"The blood of Christ set you free from an empty way of life.. You know that you were not bought with things that can pass away, like silver or gold. Instead, you were bought by the priceless blood of Christ..."* (1 Peter 1:18, 19)

Which interpretation is right? Which meaning is true?
Did you notice that two ideas are opposite from each other?
But did you also notice that both are true!?

Yes.
Christ gave His life for us.
We now give our lives to Him.

Amen.