

The Good News of the Kingdom The Incomparable Value of the Kingdom

Intro: Do you ever hear one of those commercials where you are being encouraged to buy something and the deal sounds amazing! The music is upbeat; the vocal pitch of the announcer is exciting; and the appeal is enchanting. And for a moment you may be ready to dial the number for the offer and then in the last five seconds of the commercial this guys with a monotonic deep voice speaking about as rapidly as any human being can speak says something like this:

Offer good for calls made in the next 30 seconds. Not valid in any state but Alaska. Offer good to the first ten people who call and nine are on the line.”
And then you know that the big print gives it to you and the fine print takes it away.

Sometimes the deal we thought we were getting is not the deal we got. We end up with buyer’s remorse.

But what about in the spiritual realm? I hope that when you come to the end of your life that you will say “I have no regrets? When I became a Christians I made the best decision I ever made!”

Jesus told two parables that were intended I think to help us realize the incomparable value of the kingdom of God and our decision to enter it.

Two parables about the kingdom

The parable of the hidden treasure

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. (Matthew 13:44)

Most of us would find it strange that someone should bury something of value in a field. Such was common practice in the ancient world where there were no banks or safe deposit boxes. Often people who went on a journey or in times of war would bury their treasures so that they could retrieve them later. Such a habit could easily have produced the conditions Jesus described in this parable.

Some people are at times troubled by the implied ethics of not revealing the treasure to the owner of the field and instead of buying the field knowing that contains a treasure. However, Scott summarizes, “Treasure that can be presumed to have an owner cannot be claimed by the finder.” But here in Jesus’ parable the action of the man was ethical and legal according to rabbinic authorities.

The parable of the pearl of great price

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it. (Matthew 13:45-46)

I was surprised by the diverse interpretations of these two parables.

Some premillennial interpreters say that this parable is about Christ and that the hidden treasure or the pearl is “Israel” and/or the church. But I find it a strange analogy to compare man’s discovery of a treasure and his efforts to obtain it with Christ’s sacrifice to purchase His church.

So then what is the message of these parables and why did Jesus give two of them?

What they have in common

In both cases, the characters find something of great value.

In both cases, the characters “sell all” they have to obtain this treasure.

These similarities underscore two important lessons:

What we obtain in becoming a Christian, in entering the kingdom, is something of incomparable worth. Someone once described the blessings of the kingdom in this way:

The chief of these are the religious values of the forgiveness of sins and filial communion with the heavenly Father; the moral values of the change of heart, the practice of true righteousness, and the call to the service of God and man; the intellectual values of the knowledge of the Father and the mysteries of the Kingdom; the social values of the fellowship of the Christian society; and the affective values of the peace and the joy which the world can neither give nor take away. The Kingdom might even be said to include economic values, since the disciples were assured of a providential care by which the hairs of their head were all numbered, and were promised that if they made it their concern to seek the Kingdom of God the Father in heaven would make it His concern to provide for their earthly necessities (Mt 6:33).

Paul made clear that his discovery of Jesus had been worth the surrender of his past accomplished life in Judaism.

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain

Christ...(Philippians 3:5-8)

Instead he affirmed to the Romans:

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; (Romans 10:12)

But we must be willing to “surrender all” to receive it.

The thought is captured by two commentators:

Wendland affirms that the major picture is “the incomparable worth of the kingdom which surpasses all earthly things, for which everything must be offered up.”

Hagner argues that the value of the kingdom justifies the cost. He sees in these two parables “the glorious character of the kingdom brought by Jesus, which justifies the cost of absolute discipleship.”

No matter how you find the truth, you must be willing to pay the price to enjoy its rewards. And there is a price to pay:

We must love God above family

We must love God above personal convenience

We must love God above material wealth

Jesus’ perspective is clear:

For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)

Jesus stated that the kingdom of heaven is of such value that all other treasures in life are of secondary worth. None of these things could begin to compare with the value of the kingdom.

It is worth every sacrifice

It is worth every effort

It is worth the surrender of all else to obtain

Jesus’ parables are a call to a radical decision to follow Him.

How they differ

In the first case, the treasure is found accidentally; in the second the pearl is found purposefully.

In the first case, the stress is upon the joy of the discovery; in the second case, the stress is upon the value of what is discovered.

These things suggest two other important lessons

The truth may come to us in different ways. Some people find the truth; sometimes the truth finds us!

Some people in life have been conditioned by their life experiences to appreciate the value of spiritual things and they are looking for the truth.

And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38)

Others have not had the blessing of knowing about the value of the reign of God; but the truth “finds them”. They come to realize what they had not known through life’s experiences.

And Isaiah is very bold and says, “I was found by those who sought Me not, became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” (Romans 10:20)

Discovery of the truth will bring us great joy only if we are spiritually minded!

However we must be of a spiritual disposition to appraise its value (to grasp its infinite worth).

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. (1 Corinthians 2:14-15)

“When we find it (read, ‘fully grasp its infinite worth’) we will joyfully let go of all competing claims upon our lives and make it our one great possession.”

Conclusion: And so these two parables remind us that God extends to us spiritual things of incomparable value; but they require a total commitment to Him on our part.

As we hear these blessings we may hesitate waiting for the last five seconds of the commercial to tell us that for various reasons we may not qualify or that there are no guarantees or that the offer is only for a limited group for a limited time; but this time, there are no such announcements. There is no fine print. Instead the offer is “...that whosoever believes in Him may not perish but have everlasting life”. The offer is good for everybody...for all time!

Today could be that day that you found the pearl of great price and you will look upon this day and say, “Oh what a wonderful, wonderful day, day I will never forget, after I’d wandered in darkness away Jesus my Savior I met, Oh, what a tender compassionate Friend, he met the need of heart, shadows dispelling, with joy I am telling, He made all the darkness depart”.

The treasure is all yours! The question is, “Is what God offers valuable enough for you to make a purchase?”