

So at my house, especially before I got married, I handled my finances. I can balance a check book, pay my own taxes. Now I've even got my Taco Bell budget down under \$200/month. So you'll agree I can handle finances. Good. Then if anyone would like to bring your checkbook up to me, I can take over managing your finances. Of course you don't want to do that! We have financial planners who are trained for that, but I'm not one of them. Even though you agree that I can manage a checkbook, you don't want to trust me with your checkbook. We do this all the time. We acknowledge something is true, without trusting it. We don't put our money where our mouth is. And sometimes we do that with Jesus too.

Jesus told a story which implied that the kingdom of heaven is the most valuable thing in the world. You may acknowledge that it's true. But I want to know, do you believe him?

Jesus said this on a Sabbath day when he was up in Galilee and he started out speaking to a big crowd of people with many Pharisees there. Jesus was teaching them that he came to bring freedom and forgiveness for sinners. He told them, **"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28) It was a shocking contrast to what the Pharisees taught, but as he said that his disciples picked some grain and ate it. And the crowd totally missed Jesus' point. The Pharisees said, **"Look! Some of your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath!"** (Matthew 12:2) They totally missed the point. So Jesus changed his teaching style. He started telling parables and the parable we're studying today is one way Jesus taught them about the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus tells a lot of parables about the kingdom of heaven, and if you go through all of them it's pretty obvious that the kingdom of heaven is not a geographical area. It's not a group of people either. When Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God he's talking about God's activity. The kingdom of heaven is essentially what God does, specifically what God does with the good news that Jesus died to take away our sins. With that good news, God forgives our sins. With that good news God gets us to trust him. With that good news God encourages us. With that good news God takes us to heaven. So, the

kingdom of heaven is all of that. It's what God does, when he uses the good news. So here's what Jesus said about the kingdom of heaven.

#### Matthew 13:44-46

**The kingdom of heaven** (what God does with the good news of Jesus) **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.**

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven, what God does with the good news, is like a treasure. It's not just any old treasure though, it is a treasure worth so much that you could give up everything you own and it would totally be worth it. And the man in Jesus' story puts his money where his mouth is! He sells out for the kingdom of heaven! Jesus says that what God does with the good news about Jesus, is the most valuable thing in the entire world.

So do you believe him? Not do you believe Jesus exists. Not do you believe that he died on the cross. I'm asking you, when Jesus says, that the Kingdom of Heaven is the most valuable thing in the world, do you believe him? Not would you take the mic and publicly say that you believe Jesus. Whether you are a Mount Olive member for 60 years, or you are a first time visitor who's not so sure about this whole Christianity thing, the Lord God in heaven does not care what you would say into a microphone in public. He cares about, and I'm asking you, in your heart between you and God, when Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is the most valuable thing in the entire world, do you believe him or not?

The best evidence doesn't come from what you tell other people in public because you know other people are judging you based on your words. The truest measure of whether you believe Jesus comes from the level of peace in your heart, and your calendar.

I do have the microphone and my words say that I do believe Jesus, but if you took a look at the evidence in my heart, and often the evidence on my google calendar, you would see that at times I live my life as if the most important thing in my life was what other people think of me, because my I get all worried about that and my calendar has some appointments

planned to make me look like a great pastor. What do your life say about you? Does your checkbook indicate that the most important thing in your life is long term financial security? If I looked at your worship attendance and compared it to your recreational activities would it seem like you believe that the kingdom of heaven is the most important? If I counted up the extra-curricular activities your family does and compared the number to the family Bible studies you do, would it seem like the kingdom of heaven is the most important? I could ask about the books you read, or the ways you cheer yourself up, or the things you worry about. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is the most important thing in the world, and sometimes the way we live our lives makes it seems like we think our Savior is a liar.

There was a man in the Bible who felt like this, and he said what I want to say right now. **“Lord I do believe help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)** God has answered that prayer! **I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. (Ephesians 3:16)** If we want our faith to be strengthened the Holy Spirit will do it through his word. Let’s run our fingers through the riches of God’s word and be strengthened.

God’s word says, **“Be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28)** Do you believe that hell is incomprehensibly horrible, just like God said. If you do please let me hear you say, “Yes.” Me too. God’s word says, **“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)** Do you believe that you are far from the perfect believer and so you deserve to go to hell, just like God says? If you do please let me hear you say, “Yes.” Me too. God’s word says that in heaven, **“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.” (Revelation 21:4)** Do you believe that heaven is unfathomably wonderful, just like God says? If you do please let me hear you say, “Yes.” Me too. God’s word says, **“It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”** Do you believe that a staggeringly high price was paid to keep you out of hell and get you into heaven? If you do please let me hear you say, “Yes.” Me too. God’s word says, **“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners,**

**Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)** Do you believe that God knows everything about you, all your doubts failures and secrets, yet he still loves you more than you could imagine? If you do, please let me hear you say, “Yes.” Me too.

That is what the kingdom of heaven is all about. It’s about a king who left his throne in heaven because he couldn’t bear to see you suffer. The kingdom of heaven is about a king who came to earth to rescue his people from the fires of hell. The kingdom of heaven is about a king who wants so desperately wants to see you in heaven, that he re-located his throne room right into your heart because he knows you believe and he wants to help you overcome your unbelief.

And one time that king told a story about how the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure. He said a man could give up everything he’s ever had and it would be worth it, if he gets the kingdom of heaven. Do you believe him? If you do, please let me hear you say, “Yes.” Me too.

So what does this mean for your life in the kingdom? Well it certainly doesn’t mean that your life will be care-free from now on. The disciples who heard Jesus tell this parable went on to live crazy lives, most of them were murdered. But it means that you, like Jesus’ disciples, make the kingdom your top priority. It means that running your fingers through the treasure of God’s word, becomes part of your daily grind. It means your calendar has an appointment with Jesus, daily. It means you remember you deserve hell, but Jesus has rescued you, daily. It means that you gather with others and tell them that you believe what they believe. You do it every week here, and every day at home. But most of all, it means that your heart can rest. Your heart need not worry about any other thing, because you’ve found the treasure. No matter what people think of you, no matter what your financial situation, no matter what you’re feeling, your heart can rest because you know the king and you believe him.

Amen.