

Real Life Treasure

Have you ever seen someone's face the moment they find a treasure? Maybe you can think of a movie or TV show, but in 2006 it happened in real life.¹ Amanda Reece was remodeling her bathroom so she hired a contractor. He was under the medicine cabinet, ripping out some walls when he spotted a green box inside the wall. He lifted the corner and saw an old \$50 bill. Apparently during the Great Depression, the old homeowner didn't trust the bank so he hid his money. When Amanda got there they piled the up all the cash-- almost \$200,000. You want to see their faces?

The Kingdom of Heaven is Like Treasure

That, Jesus says, that is just like the Kingdom of Heaven. Would you read this with me? **"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."** (Matthew 13:44)

Back in Jesus' day, buried treasure wasn't all that rare. Just like during the great depression, people didn't trust banks. So they'd safeguard a fortune by splitting it three ways. One part was cash for spending. One part was invested in gold and jewelry so that if they got attacked they could pick it up and run with it. And the last part they'd burry so if they did have to flee, they could come back and reclaim their treasure. In Jesus' story, someone forgot about the treasure until a man found it. There's no way he could have planned that. But when he found it, it was worth more that

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/09/us/09house.html>

everything else he owned. That's how valuable the kingdom of heaven is.

"The kingdom of heaven" that's kind of like referring to a president's administration. The Obama administration doesn't refer to the land he governed. It means what President Obama and his team did while he was in office. In the same way the Kingdom of Heaven doesn't refer to a geographical region. It refers to what God has done and is doing and will do in your life. The biggest thing God has done is sent Jesus to pay for our sins with his death on the cross. That means you are innocent! Jesus' claim is that that is worth more than everything else in your life put together.

The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like a Pearl

As his disciples are trying to wrap their mind around that, Jesus launches into another story. Read this with me. **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."** (Matthew 13:45-46)

The guy sold everything to get a one pearl. That sounds a little silly to us today. You can get a pearl earring from Kohl's for about \$60. But that's only because we have learned how to mass produce pearls in big tanks. But in Jesus' day, the only way to get a pearl was to hold your breath long enough to dive to the bottom of a bay, grab a few clams and hope that one of them had a pearl inside. They were super rare and super expensive. For example, there's a legend where the Egyptian queen Cleopatra bet Marc Antony that she could serve a dinner for them which cost ten million sestertii, that's at least three or four million dollars — for

one dinner! So they bring out the food, and it's just a normal dinner. Marc Antony says, "Ok, I won." But then Cleopatra ordered desert, which was just a small cup of vinegar. She took out one of her pearl earrings plopped it in the vinegar and downed it. Everyone knew that she won the bet because that one pearl was worth at least three million dollars.² Jesus says *that* is how valuable the kingdom of heaven is. What God did through Jesus, when he rose from the dead to guarantee your place in heaven, that's worth more than millions, that's a true treasure.

True Treasure Is in Your Heart

I don't know the spiritual journey of every person listening. Some of you were like the man who found the buried treasure totally by surprise. Maybe you first heard about Jesus when you were a baby. But others of you were like that merchant searching, and seeking, and striving for some kind of peace in this crazy world. And then one day, whether you were looking for him or not, Christ stepped in. Suddenly you had something valuable that you never had before, a Savior who can wash away all that you've done wrong today; you found hope that you'll be ok in this life, and you'll be eternally happy in the life to come.

If you put yourself into Jesus' stories, you're not the man wandering through a field, or the merchant searching and searching. You're like those guys after they found it! Dear Christian true treasure is yours! It is in your heart, and you didn't even need to sell everything you own to get it. So what would you do with a million-dollar pearl? Toss it in the junk drawer?

² Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, 9.58.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D58>

Ha! No way! Maybe, look at it every day, especially when you need a pick-me-up. Maybe day-dream about it. Maybe protect it and make sure you don't lose it. Friends, you have Jesus in your heart. Review what he's done for you and what he's promised you, especially when you need a pick-me-up. And protect your treasure by encouraging one another and holding on to Jesus no matter what it costs.

The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like a Net

And a day is coming when we will see the value of our treasure clearer than ever. Jesus tells another story. Read this with me.

“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.” (Matthew 13:47-50)

The nets Jesus is talking about aren't the kind where you see the fish you want, reach out, and catch it. This is a net that you drag across a whole area of water and you catch everything in that area. He said, that's like the kingdom of God. God's activity touches all kinds of people, but the sorting day is coming. When this world's clock runs out, the angels will come and separate off everyone who rejected what God has done for them. There are people who turned their noses up at Jesus and they will be sent to hell where there is endless weeping.

That's a terrifying warning but we need to hear it. There are so many things that tempt us to forget about Jesus treasure other things. But Jesus refuses to be number two in your heart. That's why he endured the eternal weeping and the perpetual grinding of tooth on tooth. On that cross, he experienced hell in your place so that you can look forward to heaven. He did that to win your love, so that you can see how he is more valuable than everything else in your life. He spared you from eternity in hell. And he wants to be number one in your heart above your job, above your family, above your possessions. He's priceless. I don't know why I'm not more obsessed with Jesus! Let's think more of Jesus, and talk more about Jesus. Let's treasure in our hearts the true treasure.

True Treasure Is in Your Hands

When you treasure God's love in your heart, something amazing happens. He puts his love in your hands. Read this last part with me. **"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." (Matthew 13:51-52) A teacher of the law in Jesus day was someone who knew God's word, someone like you. And when someone like you knows about the kingdom of heaven, when you know what God has done for you, then it's like you have a magical treasure room.

A normal storage room is like you put all your old stuff in there and then when you come back all your old stuff is waiting for you. But I've never seen a storage room where I come back and all my old stuff is in there plus brand new things. But that's what it's

like when your treasure is what God has done for you. You can give away Jesus to someone who needs it, and you can give away forgiveness and give love and give God's promises, and guess what? You won't have less! Because you, who have been instructed about the kingdom of heaven, you are like the owner of a house who brings out of your storeroom new treasures as well as old.

God has put true treasure in your hands. Who you gonna share with? I don't know how many emails lately have started with something like "in these troubled times..." Right now a lot of people are like that merchant searching and searching and searching and we have in our hands the true treasure they're looking for. So how about this: On August 23rd, we're having an outdoor service. It's safe, it's fun; it's casual; we'll get to sing. Who are you going to invite? Maybe you'll come sit on the lawn together, or maybe you'll just invite them to watch online.

In the pew ahead of you we've put some Mount Olive postcards. There should be about one for every group of people here. Go ahead and pick it up. On one side there's a message about the true treasure we have in Jesus. But the other side, you get to write. Whose name do you want to put on there? Right now you have true treasure literally in your hands. Let's share it.

Value True Treasure

Remember Amanda Reece who found that hidden treasure?

Turns out neither she nor her contractor were good very good at valuing treasure or sharing it. They fought over it and wasted it.

Let's do the opposite of that. Let's treasure Jesus in our hearts.

Let's share our treasure with our friends. Amen.