

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

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### **What Have You Given Up?**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The text is Matthew 13, verse 44.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

The Internet is indeed a wonderful aid in finding out about the Bible. Type up any of the over 2,000 names found in the Bible and instantly you have a summary of the meaning of the name and the life of the individual. So also with Bible verses. Type in John 3:16 and up comes hundreds of notes as to what that passage means. So also with our text for today. After typing in Matthew 13, verse 44 the following was read:

*The kingdom is a treasure, and those who really believe it will sacrifice everything else in their lives for it.* Who here would disagree with that interpretation?

From past sermons you know I am going to disagree with what appears to make sense. If the man sells all that he has to purchase the field in which the treasure lies, does it not make sense that in regard to the kingdom of heaven we would be willing to sacrifice all that we have for it? I often said that if you want to find out the opposite of proper Lutheran theology in regard to a question about the Bible, look the answer up on Wikipedia which most of the time contradicts Lutheran theology.

Now some people realize that the kingdom of heaven cannot be bought with any money or anything else we have, so another approach to this parable is the following interpretation: *Though nothing can be given as a price for this salvation, yet much must be given up for the sake of it.*

I ask you: Does that make any sense? If you have to give up something in order to get something else, is that not a form of paying a price? And if that is correct, what pray have you given up that moved Jesus Christ to die on the cross to pay for the punishment of your sins?

However the worst commentary on this verse I found on the Internet is the following which clearly supports works righteousness:

He examines the preciousness of the treasure, and counts the cost of purchase; for joy thereof - finding that this salvation is just what his needy soul requires, and what will make him presently and eternally happy, went and sold all that he had - renounces his sins, abandons his evil companions, and relinquishes all hope of salvation through his own righteousness; and purchased that field.

Did you notice that this interpretation has the man agreeing that the kingdom of heaven will give what his needy soul requires and will make him presently and eternally happy before he is saved? The fact is that there is no unbeliever who knows this prior to being saved and receiving faith. If he already has that faith, there is no need to renounce sin or abandon evil companions.

To put it another way, to renounce sins and evil companions is what a believer is able to do in the life of sanctification. But this explanation has his life of sanctification earning for him the gift of justification and being saved. It is a reversal of how the Bible speaks of salvation. First, justification; then, our response to being saved—sanctification!

But then how do we explain this one verse parable.? It has become so helpful in my teaching of confirmation that I use it often as the first verse in the Bible to examine to learn what is the true essence of the Christian faith. Once more the verse: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

My first question to the adult confirmands is to ask them how they would apply this parable to a Bible class of teenagers? Now we have already concluded that to tell them that the kingdom of heaven is such a treasure you should be willing to sell all that you have is false teaching. For there is nothing you can give to God to merit or earn your way into heaven. Then what is the application of this one verse to the hearer?

First a few thoughts on parables. A parable about the kingdom of God is simply an extended metaphor describing what goes on in the kingdom of heaven here on earth, not in the afterlife. Second, our old Adam often reads parables thinking that they are about us and what we are to do. We often regard a parable like an Aesop's fable which are about us. Third, a parable often compares the kingdom of heaven not to just one object but to the entire action of the parable.

For example, Luke 15 does not teach that the kingdom of heaven is like a lost sheep but rather like a lost sheep that is found by the Shepherd who carries it home. Likewise, today's parable is NOT saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure; it is saying that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and sells all that he has to purchase that field.

The main problem why almost all the commentaries are wrong is because they think that parables are primarily talking about us. No, like the previous parable was not primarily talking about sheep but the Shepherd, guess what? This parable's main point is not about the treasure, but about the man who finds it. Guess who the man is? It is not any of us; He is none other than Jesus Himself. And when you look up in the Bible the word treasure, it often speaks of God's treasure which is His holy people.

Here is what this parable is teaching. We are the treasure of God hidden from others in the field of the world. Jesus the Son of Man finds us and sells all that He has in order to purchase us. And quoting the Bible, Luther's Small Catechism teaches that He did not buy us with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood, with His innocent suffering and death.

This is why a Christian congregation conducts Bible studies for the members, whether held at church or in the newsletter. Because too often the Bible is read from a commonsense point of view rather than from God's point of view. For only from God's point of view do you find the proper distinctions between the Law and the Gospel which means you will be comforted to know that your salvation is not dependent on what you have given up but rather what Jesus has given up for you including for a number of you this morning His very body and blood. Amen.

And may the peace of God that passes all understanding, sustain and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of the Church****Eighth Sunday after Pentecost****26 July 2020**

For the people who are holy to the Lord and for all people according to their needs, let us pray to the Lord.

*Brief silence*

For the Church on earth, that she would continue to proclaim the faithful God who keeps covenant and shows steadfast love, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all pastors in Christ, that they would serve with integrity and faithfulness and keep the Gospel ever before us, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our president; our governor; and all who make, administer and judge our laws, that they would lead with wisdom, seeking what is best for all and in accordance with God's will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our life of prayer, that we would not neglect to pray to the God who has promised to hear us, and that we would rely more and more on Him who has made us His people, thanking Him for the abundance of rain for which we prayed, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our vocations, that we would come to see the various offices that God has given us to occupy as gifts through which we serve Him and our neighbors. And for those traveling these days, keep safe and healthy all who journey whether by land, sea or air; and return them safely to their home again. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the sick and those in need, [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_,] that they know that nothing shall separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus, and that they know the peace of His presence in the midst of their trials, and also those who protect us from trials in this land and overseas, \_\_\_\_\_ let us pray to the Lord, **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who mourn, that they be comforted with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the dead and life eternal with those they love who have died in the faith *including John Klasner*, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who commune, that they receive the Sacrament faithfully and depart from the Lord's table refreshed, knowing that they are His forgiven people, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord, You have called us according to Your purpose and now cause all things to work together for our good. Keep us safe until that day when You gather us with all the saints into Your Kingdom, which knows no end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**