The Hidden Treasure

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"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ***45*** *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls;* ***46*** *on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.* (Matthew 13:44-46)

1. Patriots and Tom Brady

Many people in our area are celebrating the win of the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl. According to a newspaper, over 100 million people watched the game last Sunday. The Super Bowl is generally the most watched television event of the year. One thing is for sure. After the game, many Patriots fans were so happy for the 13-3 win.

Patriots owner Robert Kraft said last Wednesday that he didn't have any reservations about extending Tom Brady's career to play until he's 45. Brady this year will be 42. Kraft said, "Having the head coach (Bill Belichick) we have and having Tom, there is a unique symmetry there, and chemistry. It carries over to the whole organization. I think we're very lucky." Kraft knows how Tom Brady is valuable to the New England Patriots. Brady is the one who makes many people excited about the Super Bowl.

2. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Our scripture passage today, Matthew 13:44 is called "the parable of the hidden treasure." In the parable, Jesus says, "***The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field***."

In ancient times, the custom was to hide valuable treasures in the ground. There were no banks as we have today and Jesus uses this experience to tell a story of a man who unexpectedly discovers a treasure and sells all he has to buy the field to get that treasure. The parable reminds the disciples that there is nothing more valuable than the kingdom of heaven. Jesus tells his disciples that they don't have to regret giving up everything that they had at the time to follow after Jesus.

In verses 45 and 46, Jesus shares the "the parable of the pearl." If a person discovers a valuable pearl, that person would be willing to sell everything to buy the pearl. They do this because the person knows that what they will get is more valuable than what they have to give up in return.

What do these parables teach us? The parables teach us that God's kingdom isn't something cheap or insignificant but the kingdom is the most important and valuable thing that we can have in this world.

When Jesus calls his disciples, Simon Peter, Andrew, John, and James, the four fishermen leave everything they have in the sea of Galilee and follow after Jesus. The image of leaving everything behind gives us a sense of the radical decision the disciples made to follow Jesus. We see an even more dramatic story in Matthew 9.

3. Jesus Called Matthew

Matthew 9:9 says, "***As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him."*** Matthew was a tax collector on a main highway in Capernaum. His job was to collect duties on imported goods bought by farmers, merchants, and caravans passing through town.

Tax collectors took a commission on the taxes they collected. It was common practice to overcharge and keep the excess. Tax collectors were hated by the Jews for their reputation of cheating and their support of Rome. Jesus knew who Matthew was and his reputation in town. Having a tax collector as a disciple would not have been a good idea. Choosing Matthew would have been offensive. Why would Jesus pick someone like Matthew as his disciple?

The story gives us insight as to why Jesus might have called Matthew. When Jesus called Matthew, Matthew follows without hesitation. Matthew would give up his lucrative job, family status, and everything that defined him to follow Jesus. That evening, Matthew invites Jesus, the disciples, and his friends to a party at his home.

How could a man whose life was defined by getting rich and cheating others out of money decide to follow Jesus? I believe it's because Matthew understood that following Jesus was worth more than everything that he had built up in his life.

The Jews at the time had been waiting for centuries for the coming of the Messiah. When Matthew realizes who Jesus is, he gives up his previous life to follow the Messiah, the savior of the world.

The details of Matthew's life after becoming a disciple are uncertain. But tradition follows that Matthew would preach for 15 years in Jerusalem and then move to continue in the mission field in different countries. It is believed that Matthew is later martyred in Ethiopia.

I don't think that anyone of us would be martyred for our faith. But the life of Matthew helps us understand how precious Jesus is in our lives. For Matthew, Jesus was the hidden treasure in the field. And 2000 years later, we know that Matthew made the right decision so that you and I could learn about

the eternal love of God and our Savior Jesus.

4. Who is Valentine?

This Thursday we celebrate Valentine's Day. It's not a public holiday, but many people throughout the world recognize the day by sharing their love with others. Who is Valentine? There are a few legends on the origin. One legend contends that Valentine was a priest in the third century in Rome. During the reign of Claudius II, legend says that soldiers were not allowed to marry. Valentine defied the emperor and continued to marry soldiers. Claudius ordered Valentine be put to death.

Valentine chose marrying others as greater than death. Christ chose each and every one of us as more valuable than his own life. He gave up his life so that we would all experience God's never changing love for the rest of eternity.

5. Paul's Testimony

The Apostle Paul had been a devoted follower of Judaism before meeting Jesus. But in meeting Jesus, Paul found the ultimate sacrificial love. Paul did not regret becoming a follower of Christ and witnessing of the love and grace that we receive through Jesus.

In Philippians 3:7 & 8, Paul says, "***Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.*** 8 ***More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.***

Paul learned that everything that he could gain in life seems like nothing compared to the value of knowing Jesus. Paul writes this to share with us and remind us that even as we collect more things in this life, at the end of the day, the relationship that we have with Jesus will stand out far above and beyond everything else.

6. Conclusion

Every morning, we wake up to a day filled with so many potentially important decisions. Our decisions in life form our life's journey. One of the most important decisions that we will need to make is to decide whether we will invest in God's kingdom. This parable reminds us that Jesus is the hidden treasure. Are we ready to give up what we may have in order to get the things that Jesus has for us?

7. Application

This morning I am so happy that Wyatt Wilcox was baptized. I thank Erin for bringing her children to church. These days many parents make sports games or extra activities priorities for their children on Sundays. Many parents

do not know how important their children go to Sunday School. I am so thankful to the parents of our children and youth for encouraging their children to go to church on Sundays. When they go to college, those who have been attending church will be different from other students. They will study not simply to get a better job after graduation, but to accomplish God's purposes in their lives. They will make an investment in God's kingdom.

Please take a look at what happens to Matthew when he follows Jesus. After he follows Jesus, he writes the Gospel of Matthew so that many people may know who Jesus is and believe in him.

Life is given to you and me only once. We would want to live a valuable life not only to us but to others. If we make an investment in God's kingdom with time, talents, and financial resources, our investment will yield the highest returns. Jesus assures us of the blessings to come: "***For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done***" (Matthew 16:27).

Without sowing the seeds, we can't expect any fruits in the future. Have we found the value of God's kingdom? If we have, are we willing to sell everything we have to get the hidden treasure?