

THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

SERIES: PARABLES | WEEK 6 | 7.11.2021

Well, good morning. I'm Pastor Nate, Nate Ardle, and I'm actually new here, like, as far as a pastor. I've been here for a few years now but I am new as a pastor so I thought, this is my first time to actually bringing the Word of God to you, I thought you need to get to know me a little bit better so let me tell you a little bit about me.



First of all, I love football, especially college football. Now, um, that means it's a dead time of the year for sports for me because there's no football happening. Now, you think about what is happening right now? Well, the NBA finals. I don't really care. Okay? I don't really care about the teams that are in there right now. Baseball is happening but I haven't really cared about baseball since the Cincinnati Reds last won the World Series in 1990, that's a long time ago. Um, the Olympics are happening in like a week or so. Right? So the Olympics are kind of cool, I actually do like the Tour de France, it's kind of like golf, you just kind of watch in the background, you nap in the background, it's great. But on September 2, 2021, all will be right with the world when Ohio State takes on the Minnesota Golden Gophers. Okay? [SOMEONE CHEERS IN THE AUDIENCE] Yes! So don't hold it against us but my family is an Ohio State family because my parents graduated from Ohio State, yeah, boo! [HE LAUGHS] My wife and I graduated from Ohio State. My son is going to graduate from Ohio State in December, so it runs very deep in our family, so don't hold it against us.

In fact, let me tell you three weeks ago we were with my daughter Lindsay, who's right down here [MOTIONS TO THE FRONT SEATING] at Penn State and she loved it, so you never know, within a few months we also might be saying, "We are." Oh, my goodness! That was so weak. We are! [AUDIENCE YELLS BACK] Okay. There we go, that's better.

When you are a fan of sports, especially major sports, there's always a decision you have to make come game day, you have to decide do I go to the game or do I watch it on TV? Those are the two choices. Now, how do you make that choice? Well, you think about these games that you go to, they're spectacles, they're major, major events, especially if you've ever been to State College to see a game there at Beaver Stadium, it's amazing. The stadium, the fans, all the traditions, the marching bands. At Penn State you've got the white out every year, you know, the night game you have everybody wears white and it's pretty amazing. You see all this experience you can have, but then you think about what it would take to actually go to the game.

Well, first of all, you got to drive there, so if you go to State College it's what, 3-3½ hours from here, so that's quite a drive. You park a couple miles away from the stadium, you have to walk all the way to the stadium. You get up and get into the stadium and get to your seat and you realize that the seats there in the stadium were made for Americans as they existed in 1955, not Americans that exist in 2021 [GESTURES WIDE GIRTH]. And it's always either too hot or too cold, maybe sometimes a little bit of both. You go to buy a hot dog and a soda and you realize it's more than eating a meal in a fine dining establishment. And you don't know what's happening in the game unless you're like on the 50-yard line, nobody's on the 50-yard line but you're somewhere else, you don't have any idea what's happening in the game, you can't see what's going on. And we haven't even talked about the cost of the tickets to even get in the game. So you have all of these things you have to sacrifice to actually go to the game.

The other side of it is watching it on TV, your nice big flat screen TV in 4k, it's in your house which means you set the temperature, it means that the food is free, I mean, it's not really free, but it's virtually free, and the seat is your nice, nice cushy recliner. You know exactly what's going on at every moment of the game because the announcers will not stop talking about what's going on in the game. You have replaced your heart's content, and see, you have to weigh these things against each other. And when I

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put it like all that it seems like why wouldn't you just watch it on TV and not go to the game? But it's not the same as going to the game. The game is an experience, the game is memorable in a way that watching it on TV will never be.

Anything that's good in this world you have to weigh the sacrifices of gaining that thing versus the other opportunity that's before you. Anything that's good in this world requires sacrifice, so whether it's going on vacation, you have to set aside the time, you have to set aside the money, or at least have enough credit limit on your credit card to handle the charge. If you're going to retire, you have to set aside even more money over a longer period of time in order to be able to retire. If you are involved in school activities or if you're involved in sports at school, as a student you have to set aside time you might spend with your friends, you have to set aside time you actually might spend in school itself. You have to work hard in order to be involved in those kinds of activities. If you want abs, you have to basically eat nothing – ever! So in all these things we have to say: Is it worth it? Is it worth it the sacrifices you have to make? I think for me in case of all those things I just mentioned it's worth it, except for abs because it's not worth it, it's just not worth it.

We have to think about this in terms of our faith as well—are the sacrifices we have to make to pursue our faith worth it? Many, many people walk away from the faith because they no longer believe that it's worth it. It's one thing when you feel the presence of God in your life, when His blessings are abundant in your life at this moment, when you come to church and you feel His presence and you feel an excitement of being with His people. It's another thing entirely when God doesn't feel present, when His blessings aren't abundant, when you come to church and it feels flat, maybe it even feels a little dead to you. Take it even a step further, what if your faith actually meant real significant sacrifice like losing your job? What if you lost access to certain goods or services as a result of your faith? What if you could be jailed for your faith? What if you could even lose your life for your faith? The reality is that many places around the world even right now in 2021 that's still true. That's happening to believers around the world, and the question in that case: Is it still worth it?

And that brings us to the parables we're going to look at today, Jesus is answering this question: Is it worth it to pursue the Kingdom of God? So we are looking at parables, we're going to be looking at Matthew Chapter 13 starting in verse 44, if you want to turn there in your Bibles, we will have it on the screen as well. We're in the series on PARABLES, and what are parables? They are small stories with big truths. Jesus is using these everyday illustrations that the people at that time would have fully understood, would have been very present for them in that time, and He's making one essential point with each one of these parables and that point is meant to change us, it's meant to change our lives. So let's take a look at these parables, two of them, each of them making the same basic point. So Matthew Chapter 13, starting in verse 44, Jesus says this:

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.

⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

– MATTHEW 13:44-45 (ESV)

Two illustrations about the Kingdom of Heaven. Two illustrations where Jesus is saying it's worth selling all of your possessions to acquire this treasure which is the Kingdom of Heaven. So what is the Kingdom of Heaven? Pastor Lee talked about this a few weeks ago but he said the Kingdom of Heaven is about the rule and reign of Jesus. The rule and reign of Jesus. Right now Jesus is ruling and reigning

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primarily in our lives, and through us He's ruling and reigning. He is using us to take His message to the ends of the earth so that He can rule in the lives of other people. Now, Jesus is still ruling and reigning over the entire universe right now, He is God Almighty, He is the One who created this universe, He is King of all creation right now. So He is reigning right now over this whole universe, but right now He's primarily reigning in a visible way through us, through the church, but Jesus also promised that one day He would return again, and when He returns again He's coming this time to rule and to reign in every way possible—politically, economically, socially—in every way that Jesus will rule and reign over this earth, over the new earth. So that's the Kingdom of Heaven, that's what's worthy of giving up all of your possessions.

Well, let's talk about why are these treasures that are mentioned in this these parables like the Kingdom of Heaven? What is it about them that makes them like the Kingdom of Heaven? Let's talk about each one of them. First of all, the treasure hidden in the field. When we think of buried treasure what do we



FIGURE 1

usually think about? Something like this – if we've got the picture, yep, that's what we usually think about when we think about buried treasure (FIGURE 1), we think about pirates. Okay. But this is probably not the picture that Jesus has in mind, He probably has something a little bit more like this [FIGURE 2]. Okay. This would be something a little bit more along the lines of what you would find if you were to actually find hidden treasure in a field. Now, the thing with hidden treasure is you've got to remember where you buried it, and



FIGURE 2

it does seem like in this story that somebody forgot where the treasure was buried.

And any of you who are parents kind of understand this; sometimes you buy things for your kids and you forget what you bought or you forget where you put it. This is especially true for my wife's grandmother who passed away a few years ago, but she would buy gifts throughout the year when they were on sale for Christmas for the grandkids. She would then take all of those toys and stuff them up into the attic and then she would promptly forget what she bought; she'd forget what she bought and then the attic was a mess, and so she'd forget where she put them up there. So come Christmas time people, you know, family members would go up there and grab whatever gifts they could find and then give them to the grandkids. Well, the problem is things would be left behind so three or four years later they'd find additional gifts for certain children and would then give them to those children who it no longer really made sense to give to, they were the wrong ages for these toys. You have to remember where the treasure was buried.

And in the picture that Jesus is giving for us here in this passage it seems like somebody forgot the treasure; either they just forgot about it or they passed away and they forgot to tell somebody where it was. You have this other guy who comes along, maybe he's tilling the earth, it seems like he's planting something, and he stumbles on the treasure and he realizes what he has. He realizes this treasure is worth an incredible amount. In fact, it's worth more than everything that he owns, and so he sells all of his possessions so that he could legally and ethically claim the land on which the treasure lay. So he gains this treasure.

The second parable, the pearl. In the first parable you had an accidental discovery; in the second story with the pearl you have a purposeful search, you have this merchant of pearls. So this guy, he's out specifically looking for pearls of value and he finds this one pearl of incredible value. In fact, it's so

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valuable that it's worth all that he owns. Why would pearls be valuable? Like, why would they be, potentially, one pearl be that valuable? You gotta understand how pearls were found in that day. Today pearls are really grown. They take oysters, they put a little piece of sand in the oyster and they grow in the oyster over time. They actually farm oysters now, or pearls that is. But at that time to get a pearl you had to go to the ocean, you had to go somewhere where you knew oysters could be found, dive down into the depths to get the oysters with just lungs full of air, there's no scuba gear at this time, you dive down there and you grab as many oysters as you can. You bring them up to your boat or up to the surface and you begin to open them. You hope that they're the kind of oysters that produce pearls because only certain kinds do, and you then realize that only one in 10,000 oysters will actually produce a pearl. So you can begin to realize how this little, tiny, luminescent little ball could be so incredibly valuable. And it seems like in the course of this story it seems like the seller of the pearl didn't realize what he had. He didn't realize how valuable it was, but the merchant did, he understood exactly how valuable this pearl was and it was worth all that he owned. So you have these two stories that are making one point—that the Kingdom of God is like these valuable treasures. The Kingdom of God is worthy of all that we own. It's worthy of a complete and total investment on our part.

Well, why is the Kingdom actually worth it? Why is the Kingdom worth all that we own or everything that we could bring to the table? Well, a kingdom is only as valuable as the king. We know that Jesus is the King, that means that the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven is valuable because Jesus is the King. And so as we look at these stories we begin to realize that what is the hidden treasure? What is the pearl of great value? Jesus is the hidden treasure. Jesus is the pearl of great value. Jesus is the One who's worthy of giving up all that we own and all we possess to acquire Him, to have a relationship with Him, to experience Him in our lives. So the Kingdom is worth it because Jesus is worth it.

When we consider things that we might have to sacrifice in order to gain something else—because in this story we're talking about giving up everything that we own for the sake of the Kingdom, for the sake of Christ—when you consider two things against each other you do what's often called a cost/benefit analysis. We do this in business all the time. You do a cost-benefit analysis, is it worth the cost to have the benefit of the thing that you can purchase or the thing you can gain by giving away these things? And all of us, it's not just in business do you do a cost-benefit analysis, we do cost-benefit analysis all the time. In fact, you did a cost-benefit analysis this morning as you decided to come to church or not. Was it worth it, the sacrifices you would have to make to be here? Or for those of you online, the sacrifices you would have to make giving of your time to watch online?

Even a couple hours before that you had to make a cost-benefit analysis of whether it was worth getting up for the day. Is it worth getting out of bed for this morning? Later today you're gonna, like, after these services are done, you're gonna have to think about a cost-benefit analysis of where you go to lunch – Wawa, Wegmans – you have to weigh the pros and cons of both. This afternoon you might think about a cost-benefit analysis of how you choose to spend your time this afternoon – work in the garden, take a nap. Okay? Cost-benefit analysis, we use this all the time. In fact, we build our lives on a cost-benefit analysis and it's not just about material possessions, it's also about our time, it's about our reputation, it's about our resources, it's about our energy that we expend for things. All of these things we have to take into account – is it worth it?



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Earlier in the book of Matthew Jesus talks about what it looks like to sacrifice for the Kingdom, because that's what we're talking about, is it worth the sacrifice to pursue the Kingdom of God, to pursue Christ Himself. Jesus said this in Matthew 6:33, He said:

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

– MATTHEW 6:33 (ESV)

What things? What's He talking about? In the context of that passage He's talking a bit specifically about food and clothing, He's talking about the necessities of life and He's saying if you seek first the Kingdom, God will provide everything that you need. He'll provide all of the rest of it, you don't need to worry about it, all you gotta worry about is seeking first His Kingdom. What does that mean to seek first His Kingdom? It means to pursue Jesus before you pursue anything else. It means to go after the things of His Kingdom, to pursue the things of His Kingdom, to prioritize the things of His Kingdom before you prioritize anything else. And so what we conclude based on this cost-benefit analysis between sacrificing the things that we bring to the table all that we own and gaining the Kingdom, gaining Christ, is that we ought to let go of everything and pursue Jesus because He's worth it. He's worth it.

But then we have to think about what is it that God's calling me to sacrifice? What do I have to sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom? Well, let me talk first of all about what this parable doesn't mean in terms of our sacrifice, like, what is it *not* saying in terms of what we would have to sacrifice, because when I first read these parables and I read of these two examples of people selling all that they own to acquire the Kingdom it made me a little uncomfortable. The idea of selling all that you own will rightly make you uncomfortable, but you have to realize the purpose of the parables is not to take every little detail of the parable and live your life according to it. So I'm not asking all of you to go into your backyard this afternoon and start digging up your backyard looking for hidden treasure. And I'm not asking you to go to Ocean City, New Jersey, this afternoon and try to find where there might be oysters that you could find some pearls. Obviously, that's not what the parable is about. Notice also that Jesus here, He's not commanding people to sell all that they own. He's not commanding it but He is saying that the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus Himself is worthy and worth all that we own.

Here's the picture I like to think about in terms of what this looks like for us. It's not that we're taking all of our stuff, our material possessions, our time, our resources, our reputation, our gifts, our abilities, and pushing them all away from us as if they're meaningless, as if they mean nothing, and as if they're worthless because that's not the picture here. Jesus is not saying just push it all away, it doesn't mean anything. I think this is the picture: He's saying take everything you own, all your possessions, all your time, resources, your reputation, your gifts, your abilities, everything that God has given you and hold it up to Him and say, "It's all yours, do with it what You will. God, do with these things what You want to do with these things from my life." And it's also the question of God, is there anything here that's keeping me from pursuing your Kingdom? Is there anything here that's keeping me from pursuing your Son Jesus Christ? That's the picture here. Is it what do you need to give up? What do you need to sacrifice for the sake of His Kingdom?

And Jesus was specifically, He was explaining these things to these disciples because it's His disciples who are here and present, they are the primary audience here what Jesus is saying with these parables. Jesus wanted these disciples to know the truths of these parables because He knew that these guys would have to give up everything, every one of them with the exception of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him; every one of them would give up everything for the sake of Christ. They would give up everything to

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take the message of Christ to the ends of the earth, and most of them would give up their lives for the sake of the Kingdom. So then the question is: What do you need to sacrifice for the sake of His Kingdom? What do I need to sacrifice for the sake of His Kingdom? And I've been wrestling with this over the past few weeks now, is there something in my life that would keep me from fully pursuing Christ and His Kingdom? And as I thought about it what I came up with, and I'll explain it in just a minute, is my desire for productivity. My desire for productivity is the thing that can keep me from fully pursuing Christ in His Kingdom. Let me explain.

Productivity is about getting things done. It's about accomplishing things. It's about doing things well. And I like to be the kind of person who is productive, who gets things done, who gets them done well, gets them done on time. Why is that important to me? Well, if I'm the kind of person who gets things done then people will see me as the kind of person who gets things done. They'll see me as "Mr. Dependable" – as the one that they can count on. If that happens then people can confer a sense of status upon me and that earns respect before these people, and that begins to get at the root of what I'm going after in trying to be productive.



Now, there's a positive side to productivity, certainly I'm not going to stop being productive, you can be productive in a way that's honoring to God, about accomplishing His purposes in the world. But too often for me at the root of it is not a desire to glorify God, it's actually to bring respect to myself, which is really about bringing glory to me. Why? Why? Because I think that people's respect will fill something inside of me, will fill some emptiness in me. But here's the problem with respect, you grab respect only to realize it's gone, and you grab it again, only to realize it's gone. Gaining people's respect is like jumping on a treadmill and you start running after people's respect, but the reality is you're not going anywhere, just running on a treadmill and you're trying to grab people's respect, but it's, again, it's gone. It's there one moment and then it's gone. And all this life I think can be brought by people's respect is not life at all; in fact, it's just like running on a treadmill, which is awful, as we know. So what do you then? What do you do? We gotta jump off the treadmill.

And the way I jump off the treadmill is really, for me, it's by, in this case, by believing a couple of essential things. First of all, by understanding and believing that I'm a child of the King. I'm a child of the King. I have been adopted into His family. The whole Kingdom is before me, I'm an heir of the Kingdom. The second thing is that because of that God loves me deeply and nothing I ever do will change that. There is no amount of productivity, there's nothing I can accomplish for His Kingdom that will make me a greater part of the Kingdom. God loves me deeply and totally and completely and honestly and unconditionally no matter what I do. If I believe that those two things are true, how does it change my life? How does it change my day?

Well, it changes the way I think about my day. When I get up in the morning sometimes my initial inclination is check email, and I'm sure some of you are the same way. Why? Because I want to be productive, I want people to know I'm going to get things done because I want people's respect. But what if I trust the Lord with my email, I trust the Lord with whatever respect I might gain, and I just say, you know, *I'm going to set that aside, I'm going to spend time with You right now in your Word.* I'm going to spend time in prayer right now because I trust the Lord with my email. I trust the Lord with the rest of my day. I trust the Lord with my productivity and I say it's worth setting aside those things to spend time with You.

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Or what if somebody comes to me and needs my help; they need my help, they need me to intervene, they need me to help them with something? Well, if I believe that the Lord is present with me, if I believe that the Lord will strengthen me in this moment to help this person, if I believe that the Lord is really the One who's in charge of my task list, if He's the One that's in charge of my calendar, well, then I can set those things aside and I can believe that He will be present and help me to engage and serve this person right now. So you sacrifice things because you know that the Lord is present, you know the Lord is going to help you to engage in the things of His Kingdom.

So what do you need to sacrifice for the sake of His Kingdom? It's probably going to come down to two main things—time and money—because time and money are the things that are most limited for all of us. Time is obviously limited 24 hours a day no matter how rich you are, rich or poor you have 24 hours. But money is kind of the same way, it doesn't matter rich or poor you never have enough of it, time and money are always limited. And so we have to think about what is it about my time that might be keeping me from fully pursuing Christ and His Kingdom because time does it all the time. We get involved in so many things that there's no time left to pursue Him, to pursue His Kingdom, or we allow other things. Like, I allow my desire for productivity to take me away from spending time with Him, to keep me from engaging with other people. For you who are students it might be all the activities you're involved with, all the things that you're doing doesn't leave any time for Christ and His Kingdom. And those are the kinds of questions that you have to ask yourself. Is there anything there that's keeping you from fully pursuing Christ and His Kingdom?



So what might you have to sacrifice so you can experience the treasure of Jesus and His Kingdom? Well, He's calling all of you to hold all of those things with an open hand, whether it's time or money or reputation or status. All of those things ultimately, as important as they might be, all of them eventually will let you down. You will never have enough time. You will always run out of money. Your reputation – think about we live in a cancer culture, your reputation can be gone just like that [SNAPS HIS FINGERS], just like that. Status is completely based on what other people think of you, you have no control over it. All of those things that you most desire, those things you think will bring you life, all of them will eventually let you down. But Jesus is different, Jesus will never let you down.

Only Jesus... Jesus can bring to you what only He can bring to you and what you most desire because only Jesus is always present when you need Him. Only Jesus can always provide what you need. Only Jesus is joyful with you when you're joyful, mourns with you when you mourn, is happy with you when things are going well in your life. He strengthens you when you're weak. He teaches you when you don't know what to do. And then He saves you when you sin. Only Jesus can do all these things. Only He's the one who can't and will never let you down and that's why we can let go of everything; let go of everything and pursue Jesus because He's worth it.

Now some of you have never thought about being a part of the Kingdom, that's kind of a new concept for you. Some of you have never begun a relationship with Jesus Christ. I've talked a lot today about the sacrifices that must be made in order to pursue Jesus and His Kingdom, but here's the great thing – to enter the Kingdom for the first time is actually incredibly easy. There's some very simple things that you do to enter the Kingdom for the first time. One is you recognize that Jesus is King. He's your King. He has authority over you. You entrust your life to Him and you believe that Jesus was God come to earth as a man, who died on the cross to pay the price for your sin, and if you believe those things and if

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you entrust your life to Jesus, you become a part of His Kingdom. He adopts you into His family, you now have a relationship with Jesus that will begin now. You'll begin to experience Him and His Kingdom right now but it'll also go for all of eternity.

And so if you've never done that before I just ask you to consider before God in your heart, just to yourself but He knows your thoughts, to say to Him, "God, I'm a sinner, I'm desperately in need of your Son Jesus to save me from my sin. I entrust my life to Him as my King. Thank You for allowing me to enter into your Kingdom." And if you do that for the first time you are part of the Kingdom, you are adopted into His family, you will have a relationship with Him now that will last for all of eternity. That's an amazing thing. And if you did that for the first time right now, if you said that to the Lord to yourself for the first time right now, we'd love for you to come and tell us out at the Blue Wall. Or if you still have questions about what does this mean, how do I do this? If you're still wondering what that looks like, again, please come out to the Blue Wall and talk to one of us there.

And so I'm asking all of us to consider what do you need to give up, what do you need to sacrifice, what do you need to hold with an open hand and give up to the Lord so you can fully pursue Christ and His Kingdom? Hold it all with an open hand. Get off the treadmill of what you're trying to go after and allow Jesus to provide for you. Give up on seeking after money or fame or status or reputation or material possessions because they will all let you down in the end. Instead, pursue Jesus by giving away your money, give away your money to things of His Kingdom, offer up your time to pursue Jesus and His Kingdom, sacrifice maybe your reputation, your status for the sake of His Kingdom. Let go of everything and pursue Jesus because He's worth it. Let me pray.

Father,



I'm so grateful that we can know your Son Jesus, that we can have a relationship with Him. So grateful that He's always present, He always provides, that we can trust Him with everything in our lives, that we can offer up everything in our lives. Would You help us to know what it is right now that You are calling for us to sacrifice, to let go of, so we can more fully experience your Son Jesus and His Kingdom? Help us to see that, help us to do that right now. I pray this in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen.

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