



## **The Parable of the Treasure and the Pearl**

Jesus often spoke in parables during His ministry on earth. He compared the invisible kingdom of heaven to something they could see, to what belonged to the everyday life of people. By bringing spiritual truths closer to earthly things and events, people were better able to get to know God. They learned to understand better the laws of the kingdom of God. I would like to read with you two parables that represent the kingdom of heaven. Let's open God's Word at Matthew 13:44-46.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field." People at that time often hid treasures in the ground. Palestine was a place of much turmoil, wars, and people were constantly worried about their lives and possessions. The best hiding place was the ground. It was where valuable things were safe. They were protected from thieves, fire and destruction. When the owner of the treasure died, in many cases he took his secret hiding place to his grave. That's why it happened from time to time that someone found the treasure by accident. At the time of Jesus Christ, stories circulated among the people about finding valuable objects and coins in the ground.

There is a story that once a rabbi was plowing a field, and his cow fell into a hollow in the ground where the treasure was found. At that time, therefore, some people focused on finding hidden treasures.

The first parable compares the kingdom of heaven to a man working in the field. Since he does not own the land, it can be assumed that the land is only rented. We can vividly imagine the plow suddenly getting stuck on a hard object. The man starts digging at the spot and discovers that it is not a stone. He's surprised

by what he finds. There was a box hidden in the ground where the treasure was hidden. He looks around to see if he is being watched and then carefully hides the treasure back in the ground.

According to both Jewish and Roman law, the treasure found belongs to the owner of the land. Therefore, the treasure does not belong to him. If he took the treasure home and the neighbors would see it and he would be accused of theft. The only way to get the treasure was to buy the field. Since he was a poor man, he had to sell everything he had. Maybe he sold his house, his animals, everything he owned, just to get the treasure. But it was worth it. The treasure was of the greatest value to him.

Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure. The kingdom of God is a treasure of immense value that cannot be quantified. Nothing compares to it. In doing so, he emphasizes three aspects:

1. **The treasure is hidden in the field**
2. **The treasure brings great joy**
3. **The treasure is so precious that a man will sell everything he has for to buy the field**

**1.** The first idea expresses that **the treasure is hidden**, not on the surface, but deep in the earth. The man who worked in the field had no idea that there was treasure on the land. Similarly, the kingdom of heaven is hidden. The heavenly realities are veiled, hidden from us. Only God can unveil, reveal. Man has no ability to find the kingdom of heaven. He does not even know that such a kingdom exists. The hidden kingdom of God comes to us

unexpectedly as a gift. There is nothing man can do to earn or deserve it. No amount of money can pay for it.

**2.** The second idea speaks of joy. Finding the **treasure brings joy**. The man in the parable is excited because he has found what he wasn't even looking for, what he didn't even dream of. Finding the kingdom of God brings joy in the first place. Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is among you." Whoever dwelt with Christ belonged to the kingdom of God. That brought joy. The kingdom is not among us if we are not filled with joy from fellowship with Christ. The kingdom is not among us if we are not excited about being found by God.

The serious problem is that the joy has gone out of our Christianity. It is not just joy that brings a lot of emotion, a lot of experience, spiritual fulfillment, or good cheer. It is not a joy that is merely experienced. The real joy brings a person from parable to real life experience. The text says: "in his joy he went" He goes to sell and buy. Christianity is not about sitting down and talking, having mutual joy of fellowship, but it is about an action. True Christian joy bears fruit, goes, sells, buys, serves. Already on this earth we are privileged to rejoice in the kingdom of God. Does living in God's kingdom bring us true excitement and great joy?

**3.** The third idea emphasizes the value of the kingdom of God. The **treasure is so precious** that a man will sell all he has to buy the field. The kingdom of God is not among us unless we sell all we have. There is no happy somewhere in the middle, sell some and keep some. Life with Christ is the most precious thing and nothing in my life is so valuable that I cannot sell it. Is the kingdom of God as precious to us as it is to the person who has

found the treasure? Is it so precious for us to sell that which hinders us from entering Christ's kingdom?

The man could not take the treasure home until he had sold everything. To gain is also to lose something. Sometimes we are tempted to receive the kingdom without exchange. I am not thinking about buying God with our good works. Nor am I thinking of the usual expressions of our Christianity like giving the Sabbath to God, tithing, giving up drinking, smoking, eating pork. God wants us to sell everything, in other words, to give of ourselves. We sing a song from time to time with the refrain "I surrender all." Christianity is not just about accepting certain rules that I will practice. God wants us to sell our selfcenteredness, self-sufficiency, envy, criticism, gossip, everything that keeps us from already living on this earth in the kingdom of God.

**The second parable** tells of a merchant who buys pearls. Pearls were very rare in Palestine and very popular. Anything that sparkled made the people happy. Historians mention in their records that people preferred to be on bread and water for days and dreamed of saving up for a gold ring, a pearl or an item that glittered. Pearls that played with rainbow colors were considered the rarest. The pearl was used to adorn necklaces during Jesus' ministry. It was considered so valuable that it became a picture of the rarest. Perhaps that is why this symbolism appears in the book of Revelation when describing the new city. The twelve gates are made of huge pearls /Rev. 21:21/.

The merchant knew the different types of pearls. He made his living by buying beautiful pearls. One day, he saw a pearl that was more precious than any other. The other pearls didn't seem so precious to him. The precious pearl was so beautiful that

he longed to own this pearl. The problem was that he had no money to pay for it because it was very expensive. The only option was to sell everything he had to get the most expensive and precious pearl.

The stories of the treasure and the pearl have something in common but also something different. On the one hand, there is a man who was working in the fields, not looking for treasure but stumbling upon it by chance. On the other hand, there is a pearl merchant who purposely searched for precious pearls and found the most expensive one. A lesson can be drawn from this. **The treasure hidden in the field represents to some extent the Christian congregation.** We may work in the field, we may serve in the congregation according to our gifting, but the treasure remains hidden. The very value of the kingdom of God remains hidden from us. Then there is no reason to rejoice, no enthusiasm for Christ, no motivation to sell and buy. The treasure is still buried.

Second parable speaks of a man who longs for pearls but does not know where to find them. He searches but does not find. The parable to some extent represents people who are searching but are not attracted to our Christianity because they do not find the pearl of great price in it. They may not see people around them who are filled with joy because they have not found the most precious thing in their lives. Many people today are searching in the spiritual realm of life. Today is also a time for seeking the kingdom of God.

**Both parables end with the same idea: "he goes, sells all he has, and buys."** The emphasis is on the idea: **sell everything and buy the one thing of greatest value.** The people in the parable did not buy multiple treasures, multiple pearls, but only one treasure,

one pearl. They chose to buy the one, the most precious. The implication is that we only gain the most precious when we also lose. Following is also denying ourselves. To gain the life of Christ is to lose our life.

**We are offered again today a treasure and a pearl of great price. Do we want to get rich? Who among us wouldn't? But do we also want to sell? Are we willing to lose? Are we in a situation where we lose gladly and willingly? Today, the riches in God are offered to us again. Only the one who is rich before God has a hope of life in the kingdom of God. God in our lives makes us truly rich.**

Even the apostle Paul compares Christ's presence in our lives to a treasure. Let us look again at the text of 2 Cor. 4:7. The treasure is in jars of clay. It is a material that is fragile and easily broken. In the Old Testament, God is pictured as the Creator who figuratively molds man out of pottery clay. God puts His treasure in fragile human material so that God's power will shine through.

In the following verses, the apostle Paul describes what it means to have treasure in a jar of a clay 2 Cor. 4:8-10. The disciples willingly lost, suffered, and were in trouble because they had gained treasure. That treasure made them to be joyful. Joy motivated them to go. The one who has the treasure needs nothing more. For he has the promise that everything else will be added.

I believe that even in our life the treasure will not remain hidden, that we also will search for the pearls of great price, and also will experience joyful Christianity, that our life will be filled with the presence of God. And I believe that people around us will recognize the One who brings the true value into our lives.