

Matthew 13:44-52 ⁴⁴ " Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ " Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷ " Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, ⁴⁸ "which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." ⁵¹ Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." ⁵² Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old."

How much is God's kingdom worth to us? The parable of the treasure in the field.

The meaning of this parable is pretty straight forward. The kingdom of heaven is worth more than all that we might have in this world. It is of greater worth than anything else.

The problem is not in understanding the parable but in believing it. Is God's kingdom really of that much worth? Most people would say no.

In this the kingdom of God is like a loaf of bread. A loaf of bread always has value, great value, but that value is only recognized by those who are starving.

This is why Jesus says "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."

The kingdom of heaven is only of value to those who

1. Desire righteousness,
2. Recognize how badly we are lacking it.

Many value and desire those things the kingdom of God does not promise.

Some desire freedom, the freedom to do what they want and be what they want. The kingdom does not give this type of freedom.

Some desire retribution, revenge, their version of justice. They spend their lives trying to prove other wrong, trying to take down the man, trying to right all wrongs. The kingdom does not offer this kind of justice.

None of these will appreciate the Kingdom of heaven, it does NOT offer punishment to those who deserve it and rewards to the one who deserves it. It offers YOU righteousness even though you do not deserve it. You have been freely given this righteousness through Jesus death, rejoice in it.

How much are we worth to God? The parable of the pearl of great price

This parable is a little bit trickier. Jesus asks the disciples “do you understand all of these things?” and they say “yes,” and we are left with questions. It would have been nice if Jesus had explained a bit more but He didn’t.

There are two possibilities for understanding this parable. One is that this is exactly the same parable as the previous one. The second possibility is that it is the opposite.

The key question is “what is the kingdom?” In the first parable the kingdom is the treasure, no doubt about it. Here however a simple reading of the text would suggest that the kingdom of heaven is the merchant. This is the same as saying Jesus is like a merchant.

If Jesus is the merchant than who/what is the pearl of great price? The only real possibility is that we are. And so that lesson of this parable is not how we ought to value the kingdom, but rather the value that Jesus puts on us. So much value in fact that He went and gave up all that he had, heaven itself and even his life, in order to buy us and purchase us to be His very own.

Here the rest of the readings for this Sunday come into effect.

Psalm 125 because Jesus values us “he will surround us and keep us” “we will stand forever” because of His great love.

And also Deut, “we are his chosen people.” Last week we talked about the phrase “The Lord is my chosen portion.” Here we have the opposite, we are his chosen people.

And this of course then leads us directly into the passage from Romans, that God chose us and predestined us because of His great love, not because of anything that we did, but because of his great love.

This also then leads to our third and final parable the fishnet.

We will never be separated from Jesus but we will be separated from evil, the parable of the fish net.

How are we to understand this parable? The Calvinist would say, “you see God chooses some to hell and some to heaven.” But that is not what this parable teaches, instead it is focused on how God removes us from the wickedness of this world and gives to us the righteousness that we hunger for. How do I know that this is the meaning of this parable? Because even though this parable might be a little obscure, the rest of scripture is crystal clear.

Here we learn another important lesson about parables and about God’s word in general, the rule of faith. The rule of faith is the idea that when you are unsure about the meaning of a particular passage you must still interpret it within the boundary set by the rest of scripture. Another way to say this is to say that when a text is unclear use the rest of scripture to understand it.

And so the section from Romans helps us out, "God chose us." A couple important things to notice about Romans 8.

1. The focus is on the GRACE of God – God chose us to be saved
2. Nothing can separate us from the Love of God,

This is paralleled in the parable. It is His grace that catches us. Nothing will separate us from Him. He will separate evil from us but we will not be separated from Him. The focus is always on His grace to us and the fact that we will never be separated from Him. Even the judgment of this world will not separate us from His love

All of this is done by His love, because He chose us, because he values us as a pearl of great price.

Amen

The Peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus