

## ***What a Treasure!***

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Ah, two more parables tonight – short and sweet – and ... “uncertain”? In our first Scripture reading Jesus tells His disciples that they have “been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven” – and tonight, we might be scratching our heads with these two parables.

These two parables are short and sweet – and it’s understood that they are both speaking of the same thing (being redundant for the sake of emphasis, if you will). But there are two divergent views of who and what these parables are about.

One view (likely the view that was taught to you growing up) – says that the CHRISTIAN is the man who finds the treasure and sells all that he has in order to buy the field (and get the treasure). The other view says that it is CHRIST who finds it, sells all He has, and buys it.

So, which one is it? Both raise questions and concerns for us – hence, the “uncertainty” which I mentioned earlier.

If it is the CHRISTIAN who gives it all up for the treasure – the treasure being the Gospel (the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation) – then what if I don’t give it ALL up? It’s a First Commandment issue, and we readily confess that we have failed to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”

What if I don’t tell my child that he is not going to play in the Sunday morning tournament game – because God wants us to gather around His name, hear His Word, and receive the treasure of His gifts?

What if other “treasures” – like my standing before men, respectability, climbing the corporate ladder – my health, my looks, riches, pleasure – what if these are more enticing and I give up God and His ways for them?

This Lenten Season (and daily, continually) – the Lord comes to repent us – to show us that we fail to deny ourselves for the sake of the eternal treasures of Christ Jesus our Savior.

On the other hand, if it is CHRIST who finds the treasure – then WE are the treasure – the pearl of great price! Hmmm?

How can this be, since we confess that we are – unworthy, unrighteous, undeserving – stained, soiled, sin-full, corrupt?

Here the darkness of uncertainty is chased away! God’s voice declares from the heavens that – “You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased.” And even though our sinful nature reacts violently to that, saying – “Jesus may be your beloved Son, but I can’t be, I’m a sinner!” – God declares that in the water and Word of Holy Baptism He has adopted you, He has made YOU to be His beloved son.

Uncertainty? Yes, our three great enemies – the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh – want us to be uncertain, to doubt God’s promises, to despair of our condition. But God is not a God of uncertainty and doubt. His Word is certain and sure! Yes, you are a sinner. Yes, you are holy and righteous, all because of Jesus.

Folks, that’s the key to understanding the Kingdom of God (the kingdom of heaven). The kingdom is not primarily about stuff – but about working, and ruling, and doing. The treasure in the parables is not a thing, a pearl that can be held in your hand, and hidden in the dirt, or given away – the treasure is Christ at work – finding, selling, and buying.

Isn’t that consistent with all of the other parables of the Kingdom of God that we have studied – parables that show Christ at work “for you”? And that’s consistent with the Gospel throughout the Scriptures, isn’t it? God is the One who must go to work – He does something – He acts – He initiates.

The Lost Sheep doesn’t find his way back to the sheep pen – the Good Shepherd seeks, finds, and carries him back. The branches don’t bear fruit all by themselves – they have to be connected to the Vine, who produces fruit in them.

Mankind doesn't just appear on the scene, he doesn't evolve into being – rather, God creates – He speaks a Word, He breathes life into man. Man doesn't make a decision, he doesn't “come to Jesus” – rather, Christ Jesus takes the spiritually dead, blind, and enemy of God – and resurrects him, gives him sight, and reconciles him to the Father.

So it is, here in the parables. Jesus goes and sells it all. All that the Father's plan of salvation requires, THAT Jesus will do. “Thy will be done,” not mine. And so, He sells it all, gives it all up – giving up His very life into death – “for you.”

Jesus finds YOU – gives up all He has – to purchase you. That's what these parables are about – Jesus – “who has redeemed me a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him with everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is MOST CERTAINLY true.”

For you, and for your salvation – Christ spends His life to redeem you – for you ARE precious to Him, the apple of His eye. You ARE holy and righteous in His sight, because Jesus rules over you with His gracious forgiveness. You ARE God's beloved child. This is most certainly true.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.