

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 13, 2017

Matthew 13:44-52 (EHV) – ⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid again. In his joy, he goes away and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one very valuable pearl, he 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 fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When the net was filled, they pulled it onto the shore. They sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but threw the bad ones away. ⁴⁹That is how it will be at the end of the world. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous who are among them. ⁵⁰And they will throw the wicked into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ⁵¹Jesus said to them, “Did you understand all these things?” They answered him, “Yes.” ⁵²He said to them, “Therefore every expert in the law who has been trained as a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his treasure both new things and old things.”

Introduction

“**One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.**” You know the saying, but how many of you will openly admit that you also live by it? Aura Lee and I have a running joke between us that whenever she points out a sign for a garage sale, my foot automatically presses down harder on the accelerator. If she ever mentions something about a sale here or there, we always seem to be in the wrong lane on the freeway to get over in time to make the exit. Of course, it’s more bearable to be on the other end of things – when someone’s paying you money for the used clothing and household items you’re trying to get rid of.

When people find out that they possess something valuable – some of those hidden treasures in grandma and grandpa’s attic, baseball cards or comic books, a rare Beanie Baby or G.I. Joe with Kung Fu Grip still in the box – I think the biggest question they have is what to do with it. Do you hold onto it, allowing its value to increase, maybe even passing it down to your children, or do you sell it now? And that brings up yet another variable. What’s considered valuable today might be worthless a few years from now. Maybe it’d be best to just get what you can, and be done with it.

Theme: Distribute God’s Treasures.

With antiques, a thing is only as valuable as the demand there is for it. And the less there is of something, the more valuable it is. That’s what makes the gospel absolutely priceless. Everyone needs it and there’s only one message of the good news of salvation. And you have it! Like the valuable antique, you’re now faced with a decision. Do you hold onto it or put it on the market? Thankfully, it’s an easy decision to make, because you’re able to do both. Today, these three little gems among the parables of Jesus remind us of the great treasure we have in the gospel, and we especially focus on his encouragement to **DISTRIBUTE GOD’S TREASURES**. That requires that you **be prepared to share them**. It also requires that you **be willing to share them**.

Part I: Be prepared to share them.

Once again our Gospel lesson looks at different aspects of God’s kingdom. Thinking back over the last couple weeks, we’ve seen that the kingdom of God is much more of an activity than an entity. The parable of the sower and the seed showed us how the gospel grows in the hearts of believers, even as the enemies of the gospel work against it. The parable of the weeds showed us that God’s gospel causes his people to grow and be fruitful even while they’re mixed together with unbelievers. Today we’ll see how valuable the proclamation of the gospel is and what it does to us.

If you were asked to give a presentation on a certain topic, how would you go about preparing? Unless you know the subject matter backwards and forwards already, it wouldn't be a very good idea to just go up there and wing it. No, you'd probably research the topic and make some notes for yourself. The better you know your topic, the more confident you'll be in presenting it. You'd ask yourself why the audience should care about this topic and how they'll benefit from your presentation. You'd become emotionally attached to the topic. If you're excited about it – if your heart is in it – that excitement and enthusiasm will carry over to the audience.

Those are all basic concepts in the area of public speaking. Since you're all evangelists, the same basic principles apply to sharing the gospel. To distribute God's treasures, you need to be prepared to share them. In the last verse of our text, Jesus speaks of **"every expert in the law who has been trained as a disciple in the kingdom of heaven."** Teachers were students themselves at one time. And teachers continue to be students as they prepare their lessons. Let's look at the different aspects of being prepared to share the treasure of the gospel.

First of all, you'll recognize the value of the gospel. **"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid again. In his joy, he goes away and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls. When he found one very valuable pearl, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."**

It's very difficult to teach a subject that has no apparent relevance. I have the utmost respect for algebra teachers who are able to get kids interested in math. There's no such problem with the treasure of God's good news. It's relevant for all people of all time. And it's a priceless commodity. The reason the gospel is so valuable is because of where we'd be without it. Since gospel means "good news," it makes sense that, without it, there'd only be bad news. Nothing is more precious to a person with a conscience burdened by sin than the simple message, **"Your sins are forgiven."** Without that message, we'd be caught up in the search to calm our consciences by our own efforts. And that only adds up to a circle of endless failure. Since the fall into sin, there's been a void in the lives of people. It's only when God, through the Holy Spirit, through the gospel, reveals the truth of Jesus to a person that the void is filled. That gospel message is the only one that guarantees heaven.

Is it any wonder why we cherish the wonderful gospel promises? We've become emotionally attached to the gospel. It fills us with peace and joy and hope and love and enthusiasm. It affects our hearts as well as our minds. Can't you just picture how the eyes of those two men in the parables must have lit up when they discovered the treasure in the field and the priceless pearl? We're told that the one went away with joy and did what was necessary to secure the treasure. Doesn't the gospel do the same to you and me?

We love the precious nature of the gospel. We also love possessing it. Like a person giving a presentation transcribes the information onto his mind so that he knows it backwards and forwards, so we do with the gospel. We make it our own, no matter what the cost. We forsake all else to secure it. We immerse ourselves in it. We devour it like our favorite food. The psalmist said, **"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"**

Transition

Those things – knowing the priceless nature of the gospel, becoming emotionally attached to it, and making it a very part of ourselves – prepare us to share the good news. The gospel also gives us a willingness to share it.

Part II: Be willing to share them.

Again, going to the last verse of our text, Jesus reminds his disciples of their mission to distribute God's treasures. The students would sooner or later become the teachers. **"Every expert in the law who has been trained as a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his treasure both new things and old things."**

Jesus was an amazing teacher. He'd lay the basic foundation and then he'd build on it in a way that his disciples could understand. Sometimes he'd throw out totally new concepts and then go back and show how they related to the basic teaching of salvation. In all his teaching, he was pushed by his desire to bring people closer to himself as the Savior. No one was more willing to share the gospel than Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit caused us to stumble upon the treasure, the pearl, he filled us with that same willingness to share our newfound treasure with others. Our church body is distinct from others in that it can still be called a *confessional* Lutheran church. We hold to a confession of faith that's objectively true because it's God's own inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word. You might also say that we're part of a *confessing* church. It's the very nature of a Christian to confess. Paul once quoted Psalm 116, **"I believed; therefore I have spoken,"** and said, **"With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak."** Confronted by the Sanhedrin, Peter and John said, **"We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."** How can we *not* want to share the good news of sins forgiven with others? Like the fishermen in the parable, we fling the net far and wide, hoping and praying for a good catch.

Consider how unselfish God was with his gospel. He's not willing that anyone be lost, but wants all to be saved. He won't bring an end to this world until the gospel has been preached to all. Jesus died for the sins of all and all people have been declared "not guilty" by God. Are you starting to sense a pattern? The key word is "all." Our willingness to share the treasures of God is tied into his universal mission. It's only when the angels of heaven are sorting the fish into baskets that we can cease our sharing of the gospel and punch the time clock for the final time.

Conclusion

If there is one thing that you'd never want to loosen your grip on, it's the message of Jesus' death and resurrection for your sins. If there's one thing that you'd never want to keep to yourself so that others can't share your joy, it's the message of Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of the sins of all. Equip yourself to distribute God's treasures by learning as much as possible about it. Then distribute those treasures with a willing and joyful heart. Amen.