

INTRODUCTION

Following Jesus' explanation of the parable of the wheat and tares are two short parables (the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price) continuing the discussion of the Kingdom of Heaven. These parables focus on the price of something precious. Too often we fixate on things that have little eternal value – like sports, television, prestige – and we neglect eternal matters. In Aaron's "Set Apart" message from our Agenda series, he quoted C.S. Lewis, "*If we consider the unblushing promises of reward ... promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.*" Does your life reflect a whole-hearted allegiance to God's Kingdom?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Craig Keener [in *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*], "people in Palestine often hid treasures, which might remain concealed if the hider died before he could retrieve them. Thus hidden treasure became a prominent motif in Near Eastern folklore exciting the imagination of peasants for whom it represented the ultimate dream." As a child, I buried a jar of pennies, and then forgot where it was. When my parents dug up the yard for a patio, my sister found my treasure. Why are we so fascinated with the concept of buried or hidden treasure?
2. Read Matthew 13:44-46. What do the two parables have in common? How are they different?
3. There are two interpretations of the hidden treasure parable. One is that the servant is Jesus, the field is the world, and humans are the treasure. Christ gave all that He had (his life) so that He could purchase the field and take possession of us. The second is that the servant represents all people, and the treasure is Christ Himself. Since salvation cannot be purchased, this interpretation focuses on the value of the Kingdom and what the servant is willing to give up to obtain it. Discuss with your group which interpretation you lean towards, and why.
4. There are also two interpretations of the pearl parable. One is that the merchant represents humans, looking to find something of great value, and the pearl is Jesus, or the Kingdom. The other is that God is the merchant, looking for humans to populate His Kingdom. Discuss with your group which interpretation you lean towards, and why.
5. Do you think Jesus meant to leave these parables open to individual interpretation? Why or why not?

Study Questions for Community Groups

6. Regardless of the interpretation, the main idea of these parables is giving up everything for something of greater value – the Kingdom of Heaven. What did you sacrifice to become a citizen of God’s Kingdom?

7. Read the following passages and summarize the main idea:

Matthew 6:21	_____
Matthew 16:26	_____
Matthew 19:16-22	_____
Luke 14:33	_____
Philippians 3:7-8	_____

8. Does being a part of the Kingdom mean giving away all of your possessions and living in poverty? Why or why not?

9. Read Psalm 27:4 and 8 and Matthew 6:33. How hungry are you to experience more of the Kingdom of Heaven?

APPLICATION

In the service on Sunday, David asked, “What needs to go or be sacrificed so you move from being a fan to a follower?” In other words, are there any “earthly treasures” you need to release in order to cling tighter to Jesus? Your group is a safe place to share and pray over what God brings to mind.

SCRIPTURE

⁴⁴The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:44-46 (NIV)