

## **THE PARABLES OF JESUS 2: The Hidden Treasure & the Pearl of Great Price**

### **Readings**

Exodus 19v1-6; Matthew 13v44-46

### **Introduction**

Looking at the Parables of Jesus...

- Trying to read them 'in context' of Jesus's time & setting: Not written TO US!
- BUT, written FOR US!
- So also to apply the Parables as God's word to us:
  - Last week: 'Salt & Light' = WE are to be 'A Centre of Hope' for those around us.

Today, 2 small parables: The Hidden Treasure & the Pearl of Great Price.

-I want to relate these to 'Worship': to our worship of God.

As Christians, Worship is our highest calling

- I believe God is calling us, at EFC, to new levels/expressions of worship
- Both individually, on our own, and when we meet together.

But, our worship is a response to our understanding of what God has done for us, and for who He is.

-I believe God wants to understand Him more and what He has done for us through these parables today, so we can be more wholehearted in our worship.

### **The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price**

How do you read these two parables?

-Let's re-read them: (Matthew 13v44-46, NIV)...

Many people read them as being about the cost WE have to pay to obtain Christ and to enter His Kingdom. 'We have to sell everything if we are to gain Christ'.

-Well...yes, that's there, but not the main point, it's not the first point.

I believe these two parables are not so much about our sacrifice to obtain Christ, as about Jesus's sacrifice to obtain us, and to bring God's kingdom into our lives.

-In other words the first point of these parables is to tell us first what Jesus has done for us, rather than what we must do for him.

Let's take a closer look at the first parable...

## **The Hidden Treasure**

(Re-read Matt 13v44)

First, let's consider the context:

- Who's Jesus speaking to?
- To Israel, 2,000 yrs ago. To Jewish people, living in Israel/Palestine.
- And especially to his Jewish disciples.

His subject is 'The Kingdom of Heaven'

-This means, 'The Kingdom of God': God's rule in people's lives & in the world.

'Is like Treasure hidden in a field'

- Treasure: A favourite theme for stories, old & new.
- Buried treasure: Even more exciting! We talked about it at Deacons Mtg on Weds!!
- But Jesus is not talking about just 'any old treasure':
- In the OT, Israel is described as 'God's Treasure', as God's special treasured possession.
- cf Exodus 19 passage, v5-6
- and also several other times, in Deuteronomy, in the Psalms, in the Prophets
- eg Psalm 135v4: *'For the Lord has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his treasure possession.'*

Here, talking to his Jewish disciples, Jesus is again talking about Israel.

-He's telling them about themselves and about God's work in them, how God's Kingdom will come among them.

'Treasure in a field'

- The treasure is in a field: The field is the world.
- cf Exodus 19v5-6 again: Israel called to be special among all the nations of the world,
- 'The whole world is mine' said God to Moses, but Israel is to be special, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.'
- NB 'A Kingdom': Just what Jesus said he's talking about!

In OT Israel was to be a demonstration of God's Kingdom, his rule before the whole earth.

- We saw this last week in the Parables of the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the world.
- There we saw Jesus telling his disciples, that tho' Israel as a nation had messed up through their own sinfulness that Jesus' disciples could still fulfil their destiny, their calling, through Him.

-Through His sacrificial death and resurrection that would mean they would become new people, able to obey and to serve God by the Holy Spirit, to truly be his Chosen People.

And in NT this language is applied to the Church, to Christians, to US!

- Read Titus 2v13-14: 'a people that are his very own' – 'his treasured possession'!
- See, this parable is about us here today who believe in Jesus and follow him.
- Whether Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians, WE are His special treasured possession!

‘When a man found it, he hid it again’

-Who is this man?

-We tend to think it’s US! But it’s not...it’s Jesus! It’s God working through Jesus!

-In a very shorthand way, Jesus is re-telling the OT story of Israel to these Jewish disciples.

Through Ezekiel, God had spoken about ‘finding Israel’, like a newborn baby/child, and about loving her.

-About caring for Israel as she grew up to adolescence, to womanhood, to maturity.

-But also about how Israel was unfaithful to God, and played the harlot, and went after other gods, and how God put her away – and sent her into exile.

-Israel became no different from the other nations, worshipping false Gods.

This is what Jesus means by ‘he hid the treasure in the field’:

-After the captivity in Babylon, God ‘buried Israel’ for a time among the nations.

Yet through the prophets, God also promised to save Israel, to ‘redeem’ his people.

-And in the Bible, the words used for ‘redeem’ always mean ‘to buy back’, ‘to pay for’.

-And see, isn’t this EXACTLY just what Jesus goes on to say:

‘And then, in his joy, the man went and sold all he had and he bought that field’.

-Jesus is talking about God’s work to redeem, to save, ‘to buy back’ Israel. -Jesus is telling his disciples, that ‘NOW IS THE TIME’, and that he, Jesus, has come to pay the price for God’s people!

Doesn’t this make much better sense than just seeing this parable as about US?!

-It’s about Jesus! Hallelujah!

‘In his joy’:

-Just what we read in Hebrews 12v2, ‘*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.*’

-God’s joy!!! Jesus’s joy!!!

‘He sold all he had’:

-Don’t we read this time and again in the NT, that Jesus gave up everything for us to save us.

-He came down from heaven, emptied himself, became poor, suffered, and died on a cross, all for our sakes!

‘And bought that field’:

-NB He didn’t just buy the treasure! Praise God! He bought the WHOLE FIELD!

-God bought the whole field to get the treasure!

-Although the OT focuses on God’s relationship with Israel, it was never meant to exclude the other nations, the rest of the world, the field.

-Christ died for Israel, to buy back Israel; but not just for Israel! He died to save the whole world and to bring us back to God.

-John 3:16: ‘*For God so loved...the WORLD...that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.*’

So, this parable of the Hidden Treasure, and the one following it about the Pearl of Great Price are both about the coming of God's Kingdom into the world:

First 'to the Jews' - to Jesus's Jewish disciples lives

Then, 'to the Gentiles' – to us and into our lives.

And like Jesus's Resurrection, we can say the teaching in this parable is a 'Political Message'!

-What I mean is it's about ownership, and about God's ruling as King over the world.

Nottingham Forest news: A New Owner! 'Evangelos Marinakis'.

-How did he become owner? HE HAD TO BUY THE CLUB

-And that's Just what Jesus says has happened to the world: God has bought it, Jesus has bought it with his blood!

-It mean's God is now the NEW OWNER, the ruler, the King!

-You know, whatever the result of the new Election will be in Britain, the fact is GOD through Jesus is the True owner, the true ruler of Britain, and of the whole world!

### **The Pearl of Great Price**

I can't go through this in detail today.

-But just see, this parable is closely twinned to the Buried Treasure.

-Jesus was basically giving his disciples the same message twice

-Like God gave Pharaoh the two dreams: Emphasis through repetition.

## **Application**

So, I hope you see that whatever these parables might say to us, about OUR giving up things for Jesus, they first speak of what JESUS gave up for us.

That He gave up ALL HE HAD to buy us, to redeem us from sin, from Satan's kingdom.

And if we are to think of ourselves as 'the man' who sold everything to gain the hidden treasure, we must recognise that it's because of Jesus's sacrifice for us, before we ever did anything, that we should be wholehearted in our love and service to Him.

We can't buy salvation by our sacrifice! He bought us by His sacrifice!!

And that takes me back to what I said at the beginning, that our worship has to be a response to what God has done for us, through Christ.

If we really get hold of what the Lord has done for us, we WILL want to worship Him!

-With 'joy'!

-Even to 'selling everything we have': Ready to put him first, make any sacrifice for Him.

-And all this not to 'buy Christ' by our own works, sacrifices, but just to hold on to the wonderful gift of salvation that God has given us through His Son.

This is the way the Apostle Paul described his response to God's amazing grace:

Read Philippians 3v7-11.

Dear friends,

I believe some of you may be holding onto other things as well as trying to hold on to Jesus.

-Your worship is lukewarm, because your love is lukewarm

I believe God wants some of You to give up your other gods, to stop putting them before Jesus.

I believe God wants us to become more wholehearted in our lives and in our worship,

-NOT to earn God's blessings, or to buy His grace

-But BECAUSE he has already given up everything HE had to buy us.

Let us pray.

Pastor Martin Nutch 21 May 2017

Evangelical Free Church-Radford Nottingham [www.efcradford.org.uk](http://www.efcradford.org.uk)