

Priceless: An Ever Satisfying Reality

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[0 : 0 0] Well, please have a seat and let's pray together. Father God, we gather here around your word.

And our prayer is that you would teach us of and let us see afresh the unsearchable riches of your son, Jesus Christ. Father, thank you for all the truths that we've sung.

Father, thank you that because of Jesus, you've heard all of our prayers. And so, Lord, we come on our knees this morning. And Lord, we ask that you would show us Jesus.

Show us him as the treasure of the universe. Father, may he captivate all of our affections. So send your spirit to make this word alive, we pray. In his all-sufficient, ever-satisfying name. Amen.

Well, this is the last in our series in Matthew 13. This is our fourth week. Matthew 13 is a collection of eight parables.

[1 : 0 4] And for the really shrewd amongst you, you'll have seen that we've done four parables in three weeks. Which, if you do the maths, means that we're doing a bumper crop of four parables in one week today.

And it's all about the kingdom of heaven is like. What is the kingdom of heaven like? And here, in the middle of Matthew's gospel, in the third of his big teaching sections, he's kind of laid it out for us what his kingdom is like.

The first four parables that we've covered were told to a large crowd. Chapter 13, verse 2. Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

These first four parables about the kingdom were said to a large crowd from a boat. But these last four are slightly different. Chapter 13, verse 36.

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the fields. And so these other four are kind of separate.

[2 : 1 4] These are for Jesus' friends, Jesus' followers. As he tells us more what the kingdom of God is like. The first four parables, as Jesus tells them what the kingdom is like, would have been very difficult for the disciples to believe.

The kingdom that Jesus is telling them that his kingdom is like is very different to the one they were expecting. They expected the kingdom of God to come almost instantly.

That at the moment they are under the heel of the Romans. They're oppressed. Temple worship is diminished. And they thought that overnight God's Messiah would reign.

The Romans would be kicked out. And it would be like the golden era of David or Solomon. That's what they were expecting. But these first four parables have said, No, the kingdom of God is radically different to what you're expecting.

My kingdom is not like that. They thought it would be a now and now kingdom. That the kingdom of God would come instantly. And that Jesus would reign over everything.

[3 : 28] But what Jesus says is it's a now and not yet kingdom. It's a now kingdom because Jesus the king is here. He starts his ministry in chapter 4 verse 17.

Repent for the kingdom of God has come near. How has it come near? Well, because Jesus the king has arrived. But it's a not yet kingdom. It's not here in all its fullness. It's not being inaugurated.

And so Jesus in the parable of the sower. Has said the kingdom of heaven now. Might look a little bit of a failure. That a lot of seed has been sown.

But it seems that only a tiny fraction has grown. That it may look largely unproductive. Like the kingdom is not really working. And Jesus says don't worry.

Because in the end there will be an abundant harvest. This seed will grow even 30, 60 and 100 times. Then he tells them another parable about wheat and weeds.

[4 : 32] And Jesus says the kingdom of God now may look seemingly messy. That there is still evil in the world. Even though the kingdom of God has come near.

And Jesus has said well there is this necessary mix at the moment. That the good seed grows to wheat. But the evil one planted seeds. That are producing weeds in the world.

But don't worry. Because in the end there will be a harvest and a separation. Then last week Jesus' third lesson about the kingdom. Is the kingdom of God now.

The kingdom of God. Seems so small and insignificant and pathetic and underwhelming. Just like a mustard seed or. Like yeast.

But Jesus says don't worry. Because this seed will grow and eventually dominate the garden. This seed like yeast will eventually transform absolutely everything about this world. So he says this kingdom is not like your kingdom.

[5 : 32] Because this is my kingdom. And I'm telling you. What it will be like. The real kingdom of Jesus Christ the King. Is radically different to the one they were expecting.

One that in the end would be like an abundant pure dominating harvest. But in the present. In the now. It seems remarkably slow.

Underwhelming small. Largely shrouded and concealed. And so now in the privacy of a house. Just away from the lake with his disciples gathered round.

We get four parables tightly packed together. Which somewhat recap what Jesus has already said. But also tell us new things. About his glorious kingdom.

And so if you've got a Bible. Please turn with me to Matthew 13. And verse 44. Jesus says this.

[6 : 36] The 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.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value he went away. And sold everything he had.

And bought it. Two parables. A pair of parables making almost exactly the same point. Which is this. The kingdom of heaven. Is of ultimate value.

The kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven. Is of ultimate value. I don't know about you. But I love treasure. I really like treasure hunting.

If somebody gave me a treasure map. Of say North Berwick. I would go around all day. Looking for the X that marks the spot. I don't know if it was because I was brought up on Indiana Jones. And the Goonies.

[7 : 36] I don't know whether it was Pirates of the Caribbean. Or listening to the famous five. Audio cassettes on a long journey. The idea of treasure really resonates with me.

And so to hear that the kingdom of heaven. Is like treasure hidden in a field. Jesus you've got me. I'm fascinated by this. And so I love stories about treasure.

This is Paul Coleman. Who on the 21st of December 2014. Went on a weekend. With the Wanderers Detecting Club. That sounds like a fun people to be around.

Second only to Trainspotting Incorporated. And he went down to Buckinghamshire. Now he wasn't going to go. Because it was 45 pounds petrol there and back.

But he enlisted the help of his son. And a friend. And they split the petrol. On the weekend. He unearthed 5,251 Anglo-Saxon silver coins.

[8 : 36] That were more than a thousand years old. And were worth in excess of a million pounds. You have to say Paul Coleman really hit the jackpot.

But compared to our guy in the parable. This was small fried loose change. Nothing compares to the discovery of a man in verse 44.

He's probably just a humble laborer. Tilling in the field of his master. And he's digging around. Turning the soil. When all of a sudden he digs in his spade.

And he hears the clang. What is this? Hidden in this field. So he digs around it.

And in it is a treasure chest. Now in this period. In first century Palestine. A really good way to keep hold of your treasure. Was to bury it. There wasn't a Swiss safety deposit box.

[9 : 36] You couldn't give it to the Grand Cayman Islands Bank. To look after for you. And so people used to bury treasure. We see it in the parable of the talents.

Where the guy who wanted to keep his master's talent safe. What did he do? He buried it. Because it was the safest thing to do. Now you have to say that the ethics of the man.

Are probably a bit dubious. Because he digs it. Digs again. Buries it. And then he goes and sells everything that he has. He has a huge fire sale of everything that he owns.

And these days you could even sell your wife and your family. Although I wouldn't go that far. As to the sacrifice he made. Because it wasn't finders keepers. It wasn't possession being nine tenths of the law.

As a servant working in his master's field. This treasure would solely belong to his master. And so what does he do? He pulls out all the stocks.

[10 : 35] He sells everything that he has. Why? Because he wants to purchase the field. Because he particularly likes the field. Because he knows what's buried. The treasure in the field.

It's a great sacrifice. Just imagine if you found something on the meadows walking across. Walking home today. And it was so compellingly beautiful.

It was so valuable. It was such treasure. That you then went home. Sold your house. Your car. Your watch. Sold your telly. Sold absolutely everything. Because of the compelling value of this treasure.

I don't know whether you'd be able to buy the meadows off the Edinburgh City Council. But we can but dream. But notice it's not a burden.

It's very clear. End of verse 44. And then in his joy. Went and sold all he had and bought that field. It was joyful.

[11 : 41] This treasure would bring him so much more joy. Than his PlayStation 4. Or his Honda Civic. And then we read about the second guy.

Whose very job is to be a wholesale jeweler. To go all over the world. Looking for the finest jewels. And the best gems. And the most perfect pearls.

And then one day through his eyeglass. He spies the most exquisite pearl he's ever seen. And he knows I must have it. I must have it.

That makes all my other things look like mere gravel in my hand. Compared to the beauty of this pearl. He doesn't haggle.

He doesn't barter. He knows that he needs it at any cost. And at any cost it would be an absolute steal. And so he goes and sells all he has. This is a merchant.

[12 : 41] Just imagine what his warehouse is full of. He has some jade and some sapphires and some rubies. He has a number of diamonds and he gets rid of it all.

He sells his house and his shop. His yacht. Why? Because he wants to own this one treasure. This one treasure that is worth every other treasure and ten times more.

And so this pair of parables is not difficult to understand. But it's incredibly uncomfortable to apply.

Jesus is saying that citizenship in his kingdom is of ultimate value. It is of eternal value. It is of a value that far surpasses any other thing that is worth anything.

To be bought by grace through faith under the rule of reign of Christ is worth absolutely everything. Even if it costs you all of your life and all that you have and all that you are.

[13 : 49] It is a bargain at the price. To know salvation. To be adopted into God's family forever. To know forgiveness of sin and eternal security.

To have the joy of fellowship with God. To be part of a local church family having brothers and sisters in Christ. To be a recipient of the Holy Spirit. To have sure and certain hope.

Unspeakable and unending joy. To bathe in unconditional love. To know death is dead. To have life in all its fullness and be under the righteous rule and loving lordship of Christ Jesus.

To know fresh starts. New mercies. Uncountable blessings. To receive every good gift. To be a new creation. To have sovereign purpose. To possess for yourself and take hold of Jesus as the treasure of your life.

Is a priceless privilege. One that is worth forsaking every other privilege. That you might gain Christ. And the beautiful thing is that this treasure today is not hidden in a field.

[14 : 55] It's not something that we need to join the Wanderers Detecting Club to go and find. It is available to us if we will but turn and trust Jesus Christ. And if we have this treasure is ours.

And it's all ours. Forever. Forever. Forever. And it's free. But it's very costly.

To put our faith in Jesus, it's all of grace. But the response we need once having acquired that treasure is total.

The cost of discipleship is everything, but nothing compared to the all-surpassing value of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. Jim Elliott wrote these words, He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot.

It's loose. And that's the equation. That's the truth of the economics, that everything we have and everything we own is either going to be moths and rust.

[16 : 01] It's all it's going to amount to. At the end of life, all the chess pieces, whether you are a king or a pawn, you all go back in the same box. And what is going to make the difference is what we've done with Jesus Christ.

To deny oneself, take up your cross and follow after Jesus is a high tariff. But the reward is eternal and infinite and will satisfy always.

The merchant and the laborer saw that it was a no-brainer. They saw the scale of the economics and they laid it all down that they might gain Christ and have all of their joy, all of their hope, all of their life bound up in him.

They come to the point of purchase in different ways. The laborer by chance, the merchant through a search. But don't we know the reality of the spiritual seeker who in Jesus finds everything that they were looking for and so much more?

And the person who almost just stumbles across the gospel, who almost hears it by accident but are so compelled by Jesus that they cannot but turn and follow him.

[17 : 14] When I was three working in Glasgow, I did Bible study with a guy called Sasan who was Iranian. He was a very serious Muslim. And yet had become dissatisfied with Islam.

And so he started reading the Bible and was utterly compelled by the Lord Jesus. And one day while we were doing Bible study, there was this guy called Rab, who was definitely Glaswegian in every sense of the word.

And he just wandered into the church because he wanted to get out of the rain because he'd be thrown out of Tesco for bad behavior. And he said, well, what are you doing? And I said, well, we're reading the Bible. And he said, can I join in?

And I thought, well, this will be fun. John Gemmel, who's English, Sasan, who's Iranian, and Rab, who's Glaswegian in every sense of the words. And for three months we read the Bible.

And just towards the end of my time, we baptize both of them. One who searched diligently and one who just stumbled upon it getting out of the rain.

[18 : 16] The kingdom of heaven, you see, really is of ultimate value. And it's on offer to each of us today, whether we're searching diligently or whether we've just come because a friend invited us and we couldn't say no for the 24th time.

The kingdom of heaven is of ultimate value. The truth we learn in these parables is clear, but is it a reality in our lives? Is it? Can we sing, I'd rather have Jesus than silver and gold?

Is that true in my life? Or do I sing that with a certain sense of hypocrisy? What about you? This week I was really stressed out.

You can ask Peter. I was a miserable man to have in the office next door. There's so much going on, and I thought, is it really worth it? Until I read this parable as I was preparing this sermon on Thursday.

And I thought, Jesus, of course you're worth it. You're worth every bit of stress, every sleepless night. That truly it is you who is the source of all joy.

[19 : 26] And so what about our priorities? Is this truth reflected in our priorities that the kingdom of heaven is of ultimate value? We'd all put Jesus in the importance column, but my question is, is he so high up the importance column that the rest, everything else, is so far down?

So Jesus is at number one. And we have to turn several pages before we get to family, job, reputation, and all the other things that so easily become big and dominant in our lives.

The reality is, we can all be guilty of playing it safe, retreating to comfort and self and tokens, of thinking, how little can I give up in order to keep up appearances?

And yet this parable says it is in joyful abandonment for the sake of Christ that the treasure is ours and ever satisfying. To count the cost and declare, Jesus, you're worth it today.

You're worth it tomorrow. You'll be worth it and glorious forever. I wonder, we've had a lot of people become parents recently in our church. I wonder, what is the ambition for your children?

[20 : 41] If you could have one ambition for your children, what would it be? And I pray it would be this, that they would know and trust Jesus Christ, far and above anything and everything else.

There are many who are unwilling to count the cost, who see Jesus as treasure, but cling to other things way more. Like the rich young ruler, who was told he's not far from the kingdom of God but then had to give up his enormous wealth.

And we read that he went away sad because he was very rich. The kingdom of heaven, you see, is of ultimate value. And even more valuable when we put alongside our next parable, the parable of the net.

So let me read chapter 13, verse 47. Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.

When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets but threw the bad away.

[21 : 52] This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Because the kingdom of heaven is of ultimate value but it's also of ultimate importance. Bear in mind that Jesus is still by a lake and so this idea of fishing and this dragnet would have been something they may have seen during the course of the day.

Some of the people listening, the disciples, this is what they did for a job before they met Jesus. They knew the reality of hauling it onto shore and separating the wrasse from the herring.

And Jesus says this is what it's going to be like at the end of the age. The time when the space for grace has run out. The time for acquiring this treasure has gone.

Jesus says my kingdom will ultimately be ushered in like a big fishing trip and carried will be a massive net and everyone will be caught up in it.

[23 : 02] All kinds of fish that word kinds is not the Greek word for types it is the Greek word for tribes how it's translated elsewhere. That Jesus is talking about the totality of his kingdom that this net this kingdom will involve absolutely everyone.

And after hauling them ashore the good fish is separated from the bad. And the separation isn't done on account of whether you've paid your council tax and your TV license whether you've recycled into the 29 different bins that the council have given you this week.

It's not about whether you gave up your seat on the bus or helped the old lady across the road. The defining factor for all eternity for each of us between whether we're good or bad is what we've done with Jesus.

Whether we are citizens of his kingdom or not. Whether we've trusted him and have him as the treasure of our lives or whether we've rejected him and seen more valuable treasure elsewhere.

And it's not comfortable. Verse 50 after the separation has happened see what happens to the bad fish. they're thrown into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[24 : 22] This is not just saying that the kingdom of heaven is valuable and is a viable option for many of us. It is saying it is the most crucial thing we can ever ever do.

To be citizens of this eternal kingdom so that we won't be left on the outside suffering eternal loss. that is the truth of this parable. That what we do with Jesus is of ultimate importance.

Those left on the outside suffer eternal loss. In the end says this parable how we have responded to Jesus will be the eternally defining feature about each of us.

It will mean the difference between heaven and Jesus' kingdom forever or hell left on the outside of everything that is good and everything that is God. It will mean the difference between inclusion and exclusion.

It will be the difference between eternal glorious satisfaction being in the presence of the treasure of our lives Jesus or suffering eternal loss.

[25 : 31] I don't know if you saw this in the paper a couple of weeks ago but there was a BA flight on the runway at Las Vegas that caught fire and the reason it made the news was because all the passengers coming off got their hand luggage.

As smoke was filling the cabin they got their hand luggage and then made their way out. And so many people criticised them saying they put others in grave danger by lifting out and clinging to their hand luggage when their very lives were at stake.

And the truth from this parable is that many people are putting their own lives in the gravest danger. Clinging to things that will ultimately not last and ultimately will not save rather than clinging to the security available in Jesus Christ.

Christ. And so the question that comes out of these two parables, these three parables are what are you doing with Jesus Christ? How are you responding to him?

Are you a joy-filled citizen of his kingdom? Or are you on the outside peering in thinking there's no real value there? So C.S.

[26 : 47] Lewis wrote Christianity, if false, is of no importance. And if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.

The kingdom of heaven is of ultimate value. And the kingdom of heaven is of ultimate importance. And then in our last parable, we see the kingdom of heaven is ultimately about Jesus.

verse 51 of Matthew 13. Have you understood all these things, Jesus asked? Yes, they replied. He said to them, therefore, every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.

Jesus finishes by asking his disciples, have you understood? Because we learn in the parable of the sower, it is understanding that brings good soil.

Verse 23, but the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. So he says it is understanding all these parables that make you good soil and are going to bear a crop in your life.

[28 : 05] Jesus then says, you disciples and anybody who follows Jesus Christ, you're like the owner and a curator of a stately home. And it's a brilliant stately home because it has a vault full of treasure.

And we love treasure. And what do they do with this treasure? Well, they bring out both the new treasure and the old treasure.

And what is this new treasure and this old treasure? It is Jesus. It's all Jesus. Every artifact is Jesus. Every exhibit is Jesus.

The treasures of the Old Testament, now fulfilled by Jesus, pointing to his kingdom and his reign forever. The treasures of the New Testament, seen and available in Jesus and tangible as citizens of his kingdom.

Hasn't he already said in 13 verse 17, for truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it. Talking about all the saints of old, how they longed to not only have the old treasure pointing to Jesus, now fulfilled in Jesus, but the new treasure, Jesus Christ himself, the King who has come near.

[29 : 28] This treasure centers on, revolves around, and is each of ours through faith in Jesus. J.I. Packer writes that Christ is the subject matter of scripture.

All was written to bear witness to him. He is the sum of the whole Bible, prophesied, typified, prefigured, exhibited, demonstrated, demonstrated, to be found in every leaf, almost in every line, the scriptures being built, as it were, as the swaddling bands of the treasure, Jesus Christ.

See, the treasures, though, are not simply displayed for personal enjoyment. This is not the curator sitting in his living room thinking, oh, isn't that beautiful? They're displayed to others, sharing, showing, and teaching people about the matchless treasure and paramount importance of Jesus Christ.

But today, if we are owners of this treasure, it's not just for our personal enjoyment, but it is that this treasure, this boundless, fulfilling, eternal treasure, would be shown in our whole lives, would be exhibited to others, others whom we love, conscious that it is eternal loss to die, rejecting Jesus Christ.

And so, if you're a disciple in the kingdom today, may it be our role, our joy, our task, to take this treasure that we've received by grace and put it on full display in our words and actions to others.

[31 : 15] So what have we learned today? We've learned three things. The kingdom of heaven is of ultimate value, like nothing this world has. The kingdom of heaven is of ultimate importance, knowing it is eternal loss if we fail to acquire this treasure for ourselves.

And the kingdom of heaven is ultimately about Jesus, this eternal treasure, foreshadowed in the Old Testament, fulfilled in the new, and one day present in his kingdom forever.

Why don't we pray? Pray. Father God, thank you that Jesus is the priceless, eternal, and ever-satisfying treasure of the universe.

Father, I pray you would help us who know him to show that through our lives, help us display this unsearchable treasure to others, in a way that is compellingly beautiful, and in a way that will make them give up absolutely everything with joy, in order that this treasure available to them might be theirs.

Father, I pray for my friends in this room. If there are people who know nothing of this treasure themselves, would you show them grace and mercy, and grant faith that they might trust him for forgiveness and life.

[32 : 51] that Jesus might be the Lord of their lives, and that they might know him as their treasure, their all-satisfying, ever-satisfying, eternal treasure.

Father, thank you so much for this series in Matthew 13, and I pray you would sear its truth onto our hearts that these words might resonate in our lives long after we leave this service today.

Father, bless us in Jesus' name. Amen.