

The parables of the hidden treasure and the valuable pearl

Read Matthew 13:44 -46. Please try to answer the questions before reading the overview.

1. In the opening lines of his two parables Jesus says, ‘*The kingdom of heaven is like...*’ What is ‘the kingdom of heaven’?
 2. Why is the kingdom of heaven like a **hidden** treasure?
 3. Why was the man in the first story joyful about selling all he had in order to purchase a field?
 4. What is the difference between the way the man in the first story and the pearl merchant in the second story found their treasures? How might this relate to the spiritual realities behind these two parables?
 5. In a sentence, summarise the point of these two parables?
 6. What do these parables mean to you personally, and to us as a church?
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Overview

The British television programme ‘*Antiques Roadshow*’ gives evidence to the truth of the old saying, ‘*One man’s junk is another man’s treasure*’. It’s always a delight to witness one of the shows antique experts reveal to the one seeking an appraisal that the odd bit of junk that had cluttered the closet for many years is actually a very rare and valuable treasure.

It’s intriguing that in the first of this pair of parables Jesus declares that the kingdom of heaven is like a **hidden** (i.e. a ‘not very obvious’) treasure. The hidden nature of Christ’s kingdom is a reoccurring theme in his teaching. For example, Matthew tells us, “*Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.’” (13:34 – 35)*

However, slowly but surely, Jesus began to reveal to his disciples that the hidden nature of the kingdom of heaven was wrapped up in the hidden nature of its king. For example: “*Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.” (Luke 18:31 – 34)*

How could the disciples have fathomed what Jesus was saying? Who would have imagined that the greatest treasure in heaven would be handed over to the people of this earth to be treated like garbage? But as Jesus approached Jerusalem in the final week of his life he cried out with tear-filled eyes, “*If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.” (Luke 19:41 – 42)*

But those of us who have found Jesus know that he is heaven’s greatest treasure: God’s perfect pure pearl of immeasurable worth. “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” At present the world doesn’t recognise the truth worth of Jesus and his kingdom. Do you? Take time to reflect upon the value of the treasure that you have found in Jesus. Pray that many more will find him.