

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood Church!
- B. If you have access to a Bible, please open it to book of Matthew 13:44
- C. It's a parable about Hidden Treasure...speaking Treasures:
- D. Did any of you visit our Rummage Sale or donate treasures to it?
 - On behalf of the Jr. & Sr. High ministries: thank you!
 - All of the funds raised helped send Jr. High students to summer camp last week....and it is helping send High School students to camp in 2 weeks.
 - Want to know how much we raised? OVER \$7,700!
 - If you're a high school student...or you just graduated high school last month...we have room for you with us at camp.
 - Let's get away together for a week of fun, friendship, and to grow together in God.
 - Registration info can be found on our church website under Sr. High ... or pick up a flyer at the info desk in the lobby.
- E. We are in the 3rd week of our Maze Runner sermon series:
 - Finding Your Way to Peace in the Parables of Jesus.
 - Jesus often spoke in Parables...
 - More than a third of His sayings are in the form of parables.
- F. What is a PARABLE? Greek: parabolē (par-ab-ol-AY)
 - "to throw alongside"
 - a placing of one thing by the side of another
 - A parable is a crafted story...a made-up story that contains real truth.
 - One man said, "Parables are imaginary gardens with real frogs."
- G. Parables are not child's play... nor are they easy to grasp...
 - They are designed to stimulate thought...to make us think!
 - Parables are "Things That Make You Go HMMM..."
 - They require reflection, investigation, contemplation.
 - Because of the mental effort required, parables often serve to separate the motivated and unmotivated.
- H. Let's take our FIRST LOOK at our parable for today found in Matthew 13:44.
 - It is a one-verse parable.
 - Dropped here without any introduction or explanation.
 - It is unique to the book of Matthew...meaning that this parable is not found in any of the other gospel accounts of Jesus' life.
 - It is found in a chapter that contains multiple parables about "the kingdom of heaven."
 - *Matthew 13:44 (NKJV) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."*
- I. OK, so this story is meant to tell us something about the "kingdom of heaven."
 - What IS the kingdom of heaven? We'll talk about this a bit later...
 - This "kingdom of heaven" is like treasure buried in a field.
 - ARRGGH! This be a story about pirates!!
 - Have you ever come across a treasure?
 - ...not a treasure chest filled with gold coins and rubies and skulls...
 - ...but something of great value hidden among common items.
- J. While sorting the donated clothes for the rummage sale, my daughter came across a sweater she liked and decided to buy it for 50 cents.
 - Unbeknownst to her, it was a cashmere sweater.
 - It was new...still had a price tag on it...\$295 bucks!
 - Granted, there was a tiny hole in the sweater, but that just makes it "punk rock!", right?
 - I used to collect baseball cards when I was a kid.

- While thumbing through a box of common cards someone was trying to sell, I might come across a valuable rookie card (back then it was Mark McGwire, Roger Clemens, Tony Gwynn, Cal Ripken)
- Immediately, while keeping a poker face, I would HIDE that treasure card deep among all the common cards...because I wanted to secure it!
- "How much you want for this box of cards? I'll give you 2 bucks for it." SOLD!

K. Back to the parable: This treasure was HIDDEN.

- In ancient times, there weren't any formal banks.
- The safest "bank" was a secret hiding place...very often, a hole in the ground.
- By burying the treasure, the owner would protect it from being stolen by thieves or forcibly taken away from him by conquering enemies.
- BUT if the owner died, was murdered, or taken into captivity, the treasure could remain hidden in the ground for centuries...
- ...until by chance it was discovered.
- ...that's what happens in this parable.
- A man finds treasure! (then HIDES it)
- And he instantly recognizes its value.
- Then he hides it...to secure it, because it doesn't belong to him...yet!
- "and for JOY over it" this man sells ALL he has so he can BUY the field where the treasure lays.
- Because the sale of land also included the contents of that land.
- And while he's selling everything he owns, he's got this huge smile across his face.
- He's giddy! He's whistling. He's dancing.
- WHY?
- Because this man knows that though he is selling all his stuff, he is gaining something FAR MORE VALUABLE than any of his possessions.
- He is making a decision based on VALUE and then acts accordingly.
- "This" (the treasure) is more valuable than "this" (my stuff).
- "And I will gladly give up, lay aside anything in order to grab hold of this treasure."

L. So, what does the "treasure" represent in this parable?

- At first reading, I say the "kingdom of heaven" is the treasure.
- The most common understanding is that this parable emphasizes the VALUE/WORTH of God's kingdom.
- So...what is the "kingdom of heaven?" What does this phrase mean?

M. First off, the term "kingdom of heaven" is synonymous with the more common term "kingdom of God."

- Matthew prefers using "kingdom of heaven" over "kingdom of God."
- It might be because Matthew is writing to a primarily Jewish audience.
- The Jewish people, out of reverence for the divine name, would often substitute the word "heaven" or "the Blessed" for the word "God."
- Is it a physical kingdom...with walls and a street address?
- Does it refer to the place we go after we die?
- Something in the future that we don't get to experience yet?

N. Jesus began His earthly ministry with these words in

- *Matthew 4:17 (NKJV)* "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand [has drawn near]."
- The kingdom of heaven is not material; it moves; Jesus is bringing it close.
- In this instance, it's not something in the future. Jesus has brought it to us now.
- It is a kingdom "within."
- Jesus came NOT to reign on a human throne, but to reign on the throne of human hearts.

- O. The kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God is:
- Any time and place (now) where God rules and His character, presence, and will are expressed in the realm of human experience.
- P. Now the truth is: God rules. Always.
- But most often, people do not acknowledge God's rule & reign in their life.
 - They don't experience the reality of God's kingdom today.
 - To value and treasure the kingdom of heaven is to submit to God and His Word.
 - To "captain your ship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ."
- A. Let's do a 2nd reading of this parable keeping in mind that the "treasure" represents "the kingdom of heaven"
- *Matthew 13:44 (NKJV)* "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
 - God's rule and reign...God's will...His salvation, His grace, His mercy
 - being expressed in and through your life is BETTER than anything else!
 - It is far more valuable than all you possess.
 - One would "sacrifice" or "give up" or "lay aside" anything so that their hands are free to receive the kingdom of heaven.
- Q. NOTE: It would not be an appropriate to interpret this parable as a command that we must sell everything we have to enter the kingdom of God.
- In reading through the Bible, most people don't give up anywhere close to everything they have in order to enter the kingdom.
 - But in this parable, the man DOES sell all he has to buy the field...and this is not done out of obligation or dread.
 - It is done out of JOY, EXCITEMENT, AND ANTICIPATION
 - Once the true value of God's kingdom is understood, nothing else can compare with it in value.
- R. The Apostle Paul makes a similar point in Philippians 3:7-8.
- After listing all his credentials and accomplishments, he says:
 - *Philippians 3:7,8 (NLT)* 7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ
 - To surrender something of lesser value in order to obtain the supreme value is simply common sense!
 - When we fully grasp the infinite worth of God and His kingdom, we too will joyfully let go of all competing claims on our lives and make His Kingdom our one great possession.
 - I admit, when I read this parable, I get tripped up a bit when I think about how this man sold ALL he had.
 - Couldn't he just sell SOME of his stuff?
 - Couldn't he barter a bit...so that he could hang on to his stuff?
 - I find myself mourning for this man and the items he had to lay aside.
 - (poor guy).
- S. This reveals the struggle in me (us)...with what we treasure:
- I like my stuff! I like my agenda! I like my plans!
 - I can be torn between "my kingdom" and "God's kingdom"
- T. But Jesus is helping us find PEACE through this parable!
- He is directing us away from the confusion, anxiety, restlessness, and pain we face when we treasure the wrong things.
 - Have you ever treasured someone or something that was not worthy of it?
 - Peace abounds when we treasure God above all else.
 - David says in *Psalms 16:8 (NKJV)* "I have set the Lord always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved."
 - Pastor Bill taught a few weeks ago about the Law of Congruence:
 - The only way to experience peace, joy, and abundance is to bring every part of your life into congruence with God and His truth."

- I have another issue with this parable...a serious and appropriate one:
 - This man BUYS the treasure. He purchases it at a price.
 - But that does not square with the rest of Scripture.
 - We cannot buy the kingdom of heaven.
 - We receive it by the grace of God.

U. There was a PURCHASE that secures our salvation.

V. There was a PRICE paid that provided us access to the kingdom of God.

- ...but that price was not paid by us.
- Jesus paid it for us. Jesus paid it all.

W. In our 3rd reading of this parable, we're going to flip the script:

- What if Jesus is the man who finds the treasure?
- What if WE are the treasure that Jesus found?
- *Matthew 13:44 (NKJV) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."*
 - You and me are buried treasure...buried in sin and failure.
 - Jesus finds us.
- He sells everything he has ...lays it all aside...to buy us back from sin & death.
- He purchases us at a price...His own life, given for us, nailed to a Roman Cross.
- What did Jesus feel? JOY. Joy over His beloved treasure.
- *Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 - "joy" and "cross" don't seem like they should be used in the same sentence.
 - But YOU were worth it...You are God's treasure.
 - Make no mistake: a price was paid to welcome you into His family.

X. Have you ever watched an episode of The Price is Right?

- The show is about determining the value of an item.
- "The value of an item can be determined
- by the price one is willing to pay for it."

Y. Example: My car vs. my pen.

- If the value of an item can be determined by the price one is willing to pay for it,
- Then how valuable are YOU to God?
- We can ask, "How much was God willing to pay to bring you back to Him?"
- *1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV) 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*
 - In Jesus, God paid the ultimate price to save you...
 - ...therefore, you must be of ultimate value to Him.
 - God has chosen US as His treasure.
 - In response, we get to treasure Him and His kingdom above all else.
 - To treasure the kingdom of heaven means we GIVE WEIGHT to God and His Word in all aspects of our life:
 - Relationships, Finances, Free Time
 - Words, thoughts, and actions.
 - We rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit to bring more and more of our life into alignment/congruence with God and His Word.
 - Peace abounds when we treasure God above all else.