

Parables of Matthew 13 (Part 3): Hidden Treasure

The Parable of the Dragnet

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When we concluded the sermon two weeks ago it may have seemed somewhat overwhelming to think that Satan would go to such extremes to derail the church as a whole, and to derail us as individual members of the church. In the last phrase of The Parable of the Leaven (in verse 33 of Matthew 13), it says that the whole church organization was leavened, and that could get pretty depressing. It may have sobered some of you, it may have depressed some of you, and may have angered some of you that something like this would have gone on.

Today's sermon is the other side of the coin. Remember I began the last sermon explaining some of the context of Matthew 12 and how Jesus had spent that entire busy day, as the commentators call it, defining the two sides of this great spiritual conflict in which we find ourselves embroiled. The last two sermons that I have spoken have focused on Satan's side in all this—all the things that he would do to trip the church up.

Today we're going to see the great encouragement that Jesus gives to those that are on His side of the battle. So time permitting, we're going to cover the last four parables of Matthew 13. I see some of you shaking your heads and laughing and thinking that's pretty much impossible for me to do, but it fit in my notes, so I think I can do it.

You'll recall from the first sermon I gave you a list of three sections that the parables of Matthew 13 fit into. I'll give you that again. There are eight parables divided into three sections.

Section 1:

The Parable of the Sower

The Parable of the Tares

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

The Parable of the Leaven

Summary Statement: Satan's Plan To Destroy The Church

Section 2:

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

The Parable of the Dragnet

Summary Statement: Christ's Work In Behalf Of The Church

Section 3:

The Parable of the Householder

Summary Statement: A Minister's Duty To The Church, or A Minister's Duty

So God willing, we're going to cover these second and third sections today. In a way you could even say that these two sections combine into one, because doesn't Christ say (in Ephesians 4) that the ministry is a gift from Him to the church; and that they are given in order to do the work of preaching the gospel, equipping the saints, and to help bring people up to the measure of the stature and the fullness of Christ? In a way, the ministry is part of Christ's work, but I split it out into a third section because Christ seemed to separate it out Himself in the way that Matthew 13 is structured, so I've done that too and put it as a third section.

Let's get right into it. We're going to take The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price together, because they are very much alike in form and in meaning.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44 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.

Matthew 13:45-46 Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Like I said those two parables are somewhat the same. There is a man, there is some sort of treasure, and after he finds it, he goes and sells everything he has and buys that treasure. They are very similar. These two parables are universally thought to be positive parables, unlike the first four, where there is dispute over whether they are positive or negative. I've taken the stand that they are all negative, and pretty negative at that, but these ones are all thought to be positive parables—they mean a good thing. Even so, although people agree that they are positive, they still have different ideas about how to interpret them. I think that once we go through these we'll see that the meaning is very clear.

We've already interpreted two of the symbols found in verse 44—"the field" and "the man." We'll find (in verse 37) the one who sows good seed there is "the son of man." We've seen (in the other parables) that wherever "man" shows up, it tends to be "Christ." The "Son of man" is obviously Christ, and "man," in these parables, is Christ. In verse 38, it says the field is "the world," and that's very clear. So here you have "treasure" found in the world, and "Christ" is doing something with it.

How is "treasure" used in scripture? Obviously the literal meaning of "treasure" is what would first come to mind. It means jewels, gold, silver, other precious metals, other gem stones, art, jewelry, and fine clothing. Those things would be considered "treasure." But we're talking here about a parable, and a parable is metaphorical. The symbol here must mean something other than just a jewel, or a bunch of jewels, or a bunch of coins, or a chest full of something. So how is "treasure" used metaphorically in the Bible? Let's read four different scriptures, starting in Exodus 19, verse 5. I'm just going to continue through it.

Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

Psalms 135:4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.

Malachi 3:16-17 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. They shall be Mine, says the LORD of hosts, On the day that I make them My jewels.

If you check the margin on that you will see that "*My jewels*" is literally "*special treasure*." He says, "On the day that I make them My jewels, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

Now we'll go to I Peter 2, verses 9 and 10. We'll follow this phrase, "special treasure," throughout the Bible. We've gone to three Old Testament Scriptures, and now one in the New Testament.

I Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Did you notice the progression of identity here? First, this special treasure was Israel, the one that God had made a covenant with on Mount Sinai. In the Psalms we saw that He calls His special treasure specifically: "Israel" and "Jacob." And then once He got to Malachi, God is calling His special treasure, "those who fear His name," and "those who speak one to another" about this.

In I Peter 2 it is "the elect" that are His special people. It has gone from "*Israel*," to a little bit more general—"those who fear His name"—to specific again—"His special people, a holy nation."

"Treasure" here is *the church*. "The church" fits all of those things. The church is spiritual Israel. They are "*the Israel of God*." The church is those who fear His name among all the people of the earth. The church is really the only ones who truly fear God in a godly way, and of course the church is a people who are not a people. We all came out of the world separately, individually. We were not a people then.

We may have come from the same nation, but we have people over there in South Africa. We have people in France, and we have people in Canada. We have people all over this world who are not a nation themselves but are now bound and united as God's treasure in the church.

You will notice in Matthew 13 that it says that this treasure was hidden in the world. How were

we hidden in the world? You will remember, in The Parable of the Leaven, the word "hid" was used in a negative sense, and we found that out by its context. Well, we're going to have to do that again and find out what this "hid" means here in verse 44 in The Parable of the Hidden Treasure.

If you look and see all the things that are in the context of that parable, they are all positive. First you have Christ, and then you have the world (which may not seem all that positive), but then you have "joy" and you have Christ's Self-sacrifice for this treasure. So these are all positive things that happen around the word "hid." I think it must be a little more positive than that. How then is the church hidden in the world? Remember, this is before your calling. How was the church hidden in the world?

Let's go to Ephesians 2. This part isn't quite so positive, but you'll notice (in verse 44 of Matthew 13) that it's hidden again, that he finds it hidden in the world, and then once he finds it, he hides it again, so it's kind of interesting. This is the less positive of the two.

Ephesians 2:1-7 And you He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Did you get where we were hid before? Well, we were hid in the field, weren't we? We were hid in the world. How were we hidden? We were hidden, because we were just like everybody else. We were dead in trespasses and sin, and we conducted ourselves "according to the prince of the power of the air." So we were hidden in plain sight, because everybody else was just like us, but we've been found. Once we were found, what did Christ do? He hid us again. What does this mean then? How does Christ hide us after we're called, after He finds us? Well, let's go to John 17, verse 11. John 17 is kind of an interesting concept. I think you know what it is.

John 17:11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

John 17:14-18 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I

am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

How did Christ hide us? He sends us right back into the world! He doesn't glorify us immediately, He doesn't place us up on a pedestal, but what He does is He sends us back into the world. We're hidden in the world, but in a different way, after we're called. See, we're no longer of the world, but we look like the world. We haven't changed much except internally, spiritually. So we go back into the world and we go through our daily lives, and people don't recognize us for what we are unless some matter of the truth comes up. Notice what Jesus said in John 17:17. He said, "Sanctify them by Your truth."

Put in layman's terms, "*Set them apart by your truth.*" That is what makes us different from everybody else—God's truth in us. To look at you going down the street, for the most part, you're hidden. You're an average Joe. But if you come across something like what's been happening here in North and South Carolina where the truth suddenly becomes important because you don't want to do something on the Sabbath that your boss or your teacher or someone who has authority in a certain area of your life says you must come in on the Sabbath and do, ... well, then you're separated from them, aren't you?

Of course our lives should be showing that we're living by God's way all the time, but for the most part we're hidden from this world's view by being in among them. It doesn't say that Christ came, and He finds us in the field, and then He goes and hides us somewhere else. It just says that "*He finds it, and that He hides it again.*" It does say that He went back and bought the field, doesn't it?

So He buys the world, because that is where His treasure is—hidden in the world—but in a slightly different way from when He found it. We're no longer hidden in the world because we're *like* the world and doing the sins that were in the world, instead we're hidden in the world because we're just average people, and unless the truth comes up in a matter of our daily lives, we seem just like everybody else. At least that's the way I look at it. You may have a different idea of what "hidden in the world" means, but that's what I came up with.

In Colossians 3, verse 3, we get a slightly different look at this. Paul actually uses this phrase, or this idea, when he's talking to the Colossians.

Colossians 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

I looked this up in the commentaries to see what the commentators would say, because I wasn't quite sure what this would mean. I wanted to see what several people thought, and the idea is very much the same as in The Parable of the Hidden Treasure; this means that God has a treasure, and He hides it in Christ. See, we're a part of the body of Christ. We're hidden there like in a vault, a treasure house, a place where you want to keep your valuables so that they will be secure and nothing bad will happen to them; they won't be stolen or they won't be degraded somehow.

The idea here is that if you are truly seeking those things which are above, and you're truly "in

Christ," then your eternal life is secure. I don't want you to think that this is eternal security, because it's not. The Protestants have an idea about eternal security that is very false, that once you believe in Christ, that's it, and your eternal life is guaranteed. In verse 1, Paul makes it very clear that there is something that we must be doing for this to happen.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

We've got to be seeking those things which are above in order for us to have that eternal security.

Colossians 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

If we're doing those things, then God promises that He has taken us as His special treasure, and He is putting us in His vault for safe keeping.

What is the next thing that happens? Christ finds us, and hides us again, and what is His reaction? Joy!

Matthew 13:44 And for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

I went to this Scripture two days ago, on Thursday, but let's go to it again. Go to Hebrews 12 and verse 2. You will see the joy of Jesus Christ in what He did for us in buying the field. It tells us that:

Hebrews 12:2 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.

See, He was joyful that He could do this for us, that He could buy us, that He could redeem us, that we could be His purchased possession. There obviously wasn't a whole lot of joy in dying on the cross in the way He was crucified. There was no joy in that at all. It was excruciating and terrible, but there was joy in what it produced. There was joy that He had qualified to become King of kings, and Lord of lords, and our High Priest—the Savior of all mankind, all those who would believe in Him.

There was joy that that step in the process of bringing the Kingdom of God to this earth had been fulfilled. There was joy in heaven that this had happened, and the plan of God was moving forward and God would then have sons and daughters. The creative process of refurbishing the entire universe had taken a great leap forward. The King had succeeded. The Savior had saved. What joy there was in those in the spirit realm who understood that a great leap forward had taken place, and then it made possible for all men to be saved, for those who believed.

It says here in Matthew 13, verse 44, (which we've already touched on a little bit) that he sold everything and bought the field.

Let's read John 3:16, the most famous verse in all the Bible according to some.

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Our God, Jesus Christ, gave up everything and redeemed the whole world. As it says in this verse, "whoever believes in Him" should have eternal life, ...not the whole world just because the whole world was there, but out of the whole world, those that believed in Him. Paul says in Hebrews 9 that He gave Himself "once" for all time, for all sin, and He doesn't have to give Himself again. That's all it took, but it took all He had.

Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20: 28.

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God *which He purchased with His own blood.*

That was the purchase price for the field—His own blood, which I said was "His all." So what was the lesson here in The Parable of the Hidden Treasure? Well, it's pretty simple. Our Lord and Savior, finding the treasure of His elect in the world, conceals and protects them against all the depredations of the enemy. Remember, we're hidden. That's the protection part. And with His own life's blood, He redeemed us with joy. That's the lesson of this parable.

This should give us great confidence in our spiritual battles. The greatest battle has already been won, and not only that—since we are His treasure and since He hides us (and protects us through that hiding), and sanctifies us through His truth, and prayed there that we would be protected from the evil one, it's not as bad as it seems. We've got a lot more going for us than we might think. So to summarize this parable here, Christ joyfully gave His all for our redemption, and protects us even though we're still in the world.

Now we'll go on to The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price. Like I said, it is immediately obvious that The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price and The Parable of the Hidden Treasure are similar because of their similar form and the similar symbols that are in them. They both tell the same basic story. It's interesting that in this series of parables here, Christ did two that are so very similar. This is not unusual.

In Genesis 41 (verses 1 through 7) is Pharaoh's dream about the upcoming famine. If you will notice, God gave it to Pharaoh twice. I can't remember which order it was in, whether it was the grain first, and then the kine, or whether there was the kine first, and then the grain. It doesn't matter. He did this to emphasize the dream to Pharaoh. That was the first reason. Repetition is the best form of emphasis.

The second reason He did it was because there was something in the second one that wasn't in the first one that was important for Pharaoh to understand. What this tells me (and what it told Joseph) is that there was not only going to be a famine of the vegetation, but there was also going to be a famine in the livestock as well. This would be a total famine, and so they had to prepare accordingly. In these two parables then—The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price—there must be something additional in The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price that is not quite understandable from The Parable of the Hidden Treasure. He gave another parable with a little bit different meaning ... very similar, but a little bit different in order for us to be encouraged.

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

Let's talk about the merchant first, in the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price. The merchant was common in Palestine because Palestine is the crossroads of the Middle East. It was the crossroads of the Roman world. To get anywhere you pretty much had to go through Palestine. Even if you had to ship things, they often went through Palestine because they would go along the coast and they would make their ports there along the coast of Palestine.

The particular merchant that Jesus speaks about was a very uncommon merchant. He was special. He was so special because he had a very narrow niche in the market. He only bought and sold pearls. This gives us an indication then of what kind of person this merchant was. If he could devote all his time just to the seeking of pearls, he must have been a pretty rich merchant. He must have been pretty highly placed. He wasn't your common caravan master. He was someone whom we would call "a specialist." You might even call him a buyer for a particular type of person, like royalty.

The reason I mention that is because, in the ancient world, pearls were so rare that usually only kings could afford them, and the kings used them in their crowns and on their clothing to show off (to show their royal splendor) and to say, *"Look at me. I can afford pearls."*

Some have thought that the merchant is a person like you and me who goes seeking after Christ, or after the gospel, or after the kingdom. But when you look at it from the Bible, that is just absolutely impossible. It cannot be. We'll just take a couple of verses here to show this.

Romans 3:11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

Right there that idea gets thrown out the window. Nobody seeks after God. Let's look at another one—John 6:44. You know this one by heart.

John 6:44 No man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.

It basically says nobody can seek after God either. Let's look at Isaiah 55:1

Isaiah 55:1 Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you

who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.

It means we can't buy anything from God, so how could we be the merchant who goes and buys the pearl. It's not possible. Luke 7: 42 is interesting too. This is part of a parable here of the two debtors. One phrase is very interesting in this.

Luke 7:42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both.

The creditor here is God. The debtors are you and me. And Christ (God) freely forgives us even though we have nothing to buy forgiveness with, ...and so we can't be the merchant. There is just no way. First, we don't seek Him; secondly, we have to be called in order to seek Him; and thirdly, we can't buy it, and if we could buy it, we don't have the money to buy it. On all counts, it's impossible. We cannot be the merchant. That leaves only one person that it could be—Jesus Christ Himself. He's the only one with enough "money" in order to buy this pearl.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.

John 10:3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

Only Christ can do that.

Isaiah 43:1 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by your name; You are Mine.

That tells us who the merchant is. Without a doubt it's Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

Like the hidden treasure, the pearl is something of value. It can be part of a treasure, but there is one difference between "treasure" and "the pearl." Notice what it says in verse 44 of Matthew 13. It says "like treasure," but notice what it says in verse 46—"one pearl of great price." What's the difference? "Treasure" is a collective noun. That is, it is made up of many pieces of gold, silver, coins, articles of fine clothing, art, gem stones. It's like the treasure of a pirate that's buried somewhere in the Caribbean. There's usually a chest of something. That's what He's looking at in the Parable of the Hidden Treasure—many some things, many treasures. What He is looking at in The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price is one particular treasure. We might call it "the centerpiece" of His treasure as this one Pearl of Great Price.

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.

Here you have that "one" bit again, but I wanted "one body." Here Paul stresses the church's singularity, its uniqueness, its oneness. There is only ONE church.

Romans 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Here Paul emphasizes our unity even though we're made up of many. We're many members, but we're one body. Not only that, we're *interdependent* with one another. We rely on one another to do certain things within that body to make the body function as it's supposed to.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Here this verse focuses us on being called into one body, and God's part in it, that God specifically put us in one body to do something, to be something. In I Corinthians 12 (verses 12 through 14, and verse 27) this is repeated. We are many members, but we are one body, and God put us each in the body to do what He wants us to do.

I Corinthians 12:12-14 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.

I Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

That "*pearl*" is "*the church*," and the pearl is the church as a whole, whereas the "*treasure*," in the preceding parable is "*the church*" in its individual members. In the first parable Christ is assuring us that He has His eye on us, that we are so valuable to Him as an individual, but in this this parable, He switches the focus just slightly to let us know that all of us as a whole, as a body, as His Bride, are important. He makes that His centerpiece of His treasure—the Bride who will marry His Son.

In Ephesians 5:25-27, we'll bring out the "bride" aspect here.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present

it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

This gives you some idea of how much value Christ places in the church. We are His Bride. We are the centerpiece of His kingdom, of His treasure. This is pretty high praise. A pretty lofty goal. It says here in Ephesians 5 that once He calls us a church, He sets out to perfect us, to make us absolutely holy and without blemish so we can be a fitting spouse for Him.

Revelation 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God.

So what's the lesson here? How could we summarize this? Christ joyfully gave His all for the church as His Bride, and He is going to prepare it as His adornment, just like a king adorns his clothing and his crown with pearls. This should give us even more encouragement in our battle against Satan. We have so much going for us, not only as individual sons and daughters of God, but because we have been