

Focus Text

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.'" **(Matthew 13:44–52, ESV)**

1. The Hidden Treasure

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." **(Matthew 13:44, ESV)**

A man goes and begins digging in a field, and when he finds a priceless treasure, he quickly buys the field, spending everything he has to acquire it, but more importantly, the priceless treasure hidden in the dirt. The oddity in the parable is someone being permitted to dig around in a field that they don't own, then purchasing it. We will dig into the meaning of this parable together with the next one, the hidden pearl.

2. The Hidden Pearl

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

(Matthew 13:45–46, ESV)

Like the treasurer hidden in the field, the man who finds a priceless pearl realizes that this pearl has endless value and gives all he has to have it. There are some debates about the subject of these parables. Is Jesus speaking about Himself and the price of His own life to obtain the treasure and the pearl? This would show God’s endless love and the value He places on His image bearers. But as we seen in other parables, this is about the discovery of the Kingdom of God. Other scholars suggest this is about the sinner finding forgiveness and giving away all they have to pursue Christ. This demonstrates the zeal of the early church and its willingness to give even their own lives for Jesus. However, this would seem to suggest that entry into the Kingdom is achieved only through martyrdom, which defies God’s gracious offer to anyone who would follow Him. The subject of this parable isn’t the focal point. It’s express value of the being in the Kingdom. Jesus is the king of the Kingdom and knows its endless value; therefore, this parable is for those seeking Christ. Once you have found Christ and His offer of eternal life in His kingdom, everything else you have loses its value in comparison. For some, that would involve losing their lives, but for anyone who has seen Christ and has their name in the book of life, this becomes their prized possession, and they care for and treasure it above all else. For modern American Christians, this is a challenge to not see their religion as a once-a-week action but as their whole way of being. Jesus comes to the front of importance, and all other things are placed behind Jesus. Simply put, Christianity is our way of life, not a part of our lives that we give to Christ.

“The parable of the hidden treasure pairs with the parable of the pearl merchant, together illustrating the kingdom’s supreme worth.^[1] Jesus depicts the kingdom as treasure concealed in a field; when a man discovers it, he joyfully liquidates everything he possesses to purchase the field and secure the treasure.^[1]

Interpreters diverge significantly on what the parable represents. Some scholars identify the man as Jesus himself, with the treasure representing a faithful remnant of believing Jews dispersed throughout the world.^[2] On this reading, Jesus went to the cross and surrendered all he possessed in order to purchase the world where the treasure lay hidden.^[2] Others interpret the treasure as the church—God’s people, whom the Lord treasures and who

were promised to Christ before the world’s foundation.[3] Jesus “sold all that He had” to purchase this treasure of his believing people, loving the church and giving himself for it, purchasing it with his own blood.[3]

A third interpretive stream applies the parable directly to believers. The parables concern discovering the kingdom and surrendering everything to obtain it—expressing the kingdom’s incomparable worth and the necessity of risking everything to seize the unexpected opportunity presented by God’s salvific kingdom.[4] The kingdom of heaven surpasses all other possessions, requiring willingness to relinquish everything to attain it.[1]

Importantly, while some apply the parable to sinners giving up all to find Christ, this interpretation conflicts with the doctrine of grace, which insists salvation comes without price.[2] Rather than depicting salvation as something purchased through human effort, the parable emphasizes the kingdom’s transcendent value—whether understood as Christ’s redemptive work, the church’s formation, or believers’ radical reorientation toward divine priorities. The joy accompanying the man’s sacrifice signals not reluctant loss but joyful recognition that kingdom treasure infinitely exceeds whatever one surrenders.”¹

¹ [1] Bruce B. Barton, [Matthew](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), [273–274](#).

[2] William MacDonald, [Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments](#), ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), [1258–1259](#).

[3] James Smith and Robert Lee, [Handfuls on Purpose for Christian Workers and Bible Students, Series I–XIII](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), [152](#).

[4] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., [A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew](#), International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), [2:435](#).

3. The Nets

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." **(Matthew 13:47-50, ESV)**

Jesus once again dives into the end of the age and to the final judgement. Just as a fisherman must sort through their catch and evaluate the fish that will sell like tilapia and those that wouldn't, catfish. Since the Galilee is known for fishing, everyone would recognize this imagery, and Jesus then compares a daily sorting process to the final judgement. Those whose names are written in the book of life and those who will receive God's judgment at the end of the age. This parable reminds us of the weeds and wheat, except Satan isn't the evil one; this is tied to the lives of the people.

One of the phrases spoken most often in Christian circles is "I don't want to be pushy." There is this mindset that human comfort is the highest goal, and talking about Jesus is seen as too forceful and unwelcome. However, if one holds that God will judge and punish those who have rebelled against Him, then being pushy isn't the worst possible outcome; weeping and gnashing of teeth is. There needs to be some urgency in the life of the Christian because if someone lives in rebellion and no one is willing to push back, the rebel will be judged and thrown out. C.S. Lewis said that the doctrine of Hell was the saddest doctrine in all of Christianity, but if one refuses to commune with God, Lewis said, He will grant them their request. Friends, where is our urgency to talk about Jesus?

3.8.26 2026 Blessed “Treasurer” Matt 13:44-52

“The parable compares the kingdom of heaven to a net cast into the sea that indiscriminately gathers fish of all kinds, which fishermen later sort on shore, keeping the good and discarding the bad. ([Matt 13:47–50](#)) The image would have resonated with people living around the Sea of Galilee, who witnessed this fishing practice regularly.^[1]

The parable’s meaning emerges through its interpretation. At the end of the age, angels will separate the evil from the righteous ([Matt 13:47–50](#)), with the wicked thrown into a fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ([Matt 13:47–50](#)) This message parallels the parable of the weeds^[1], though with a crucial distinction: in the weeds parable, evil results from Satan’s work, whereas in the net parable, mixed good and bad simply reflects the nature of reality.^[1]

The parable addresses an uncomfortable reality about the church. The community of faith will contain both good and bad people, a condition that won’t be fully resolved until the final judgment.^[1] Only God possesses the authority to judge who is truly good or bad, and He will exercise that judgment on the last day.^[1] This has significant implications for church practice: the parable encourages an open approach to evangelism, with the church’s doors and programs open to all, casting its net widely.^[2] The responsibility for distinguishing the authentic from the fraudulent belongs to the angels, not to human members.^[2]

Interpretive traditions have extended the parable’s symbolism in various ways. Medieval interpreters saw the vessels containing good fish as representing heavenly mansions, and the net itself as the Gospel woven from Old and New Testaments.^[3] Augustine invoked the parable against the Donatists, emphasizing that the church—like the net—necessarily contains both the just and sinners until the world’s end brings separation.^[3]²

“The Sea of Galilee contained eighteen indigenous fish species, with ten commercially important ones divided into three main groups: the musht, the barbels, and the sardines.^[1]

Valuable fish included the Tilapia Galilea (musht), which could reach about sixteen inches and were tasty though bony, and gathered in shallow northern waters during winter months^[1]. Barbels, members of the carp family, had been fished commercially since biblical times and remained popular for Sabbath meals and Jewish feasts.^[1] Kinneret sardines, though the smallest commercial variety, comprised about half the yearly catch, were found in large schools, and were preserved by pickling.^[1]

Worthless fish that would be discarded included catfish, the largest indigenous fish in the Kinneret, which had skin instead of scales and therefore were not kosher and could not be eaten according to Mosaic law.^[1] Biblical dietary law required all fish to possess “fins and scales” to be considered clean or acceptable for eating, which would rule out all shellfish, sea mammals, sharks, eels, and catfish.^[2]

The parable’s imagery would have been immediately recognizable to people in the region. Fishermen used large nets drawn behind two boats that caught both good and bad fish indiscriminately, making it impossible to separate them during the actual catch.^[3] Only after hauling the net to shore could they sort the edible from the inedible—a process that mirrors the parable’s central point about the mixed nature of the kingdom until final judgment arrives.”³

² [1] Roger L. Hahn, *Matthew: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 178–179.

[2] Thomas G. Long, *Matthew*, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 157–158.

[3] Ian Boxall, *Matthew through the Centuries*, ed. John Sawyer et al., Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Hoboken, NJ; West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 221.

³ [1] J. Carl Laney, “Fishing the Sea of Galilee.” in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle, Lexham Geographic Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 168–169.

[2] Donald Fowler, “Fish,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 463.

[3] Grant C. Richison, *Verse by Verse through the Book of Matthew* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2011). [See [here](#).]

4. The Hidden Treasure

“Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”” **(Matthew 13:51-52, ESV)**

Finally, we see Jesus talking about the new and old treasures. Uniquely, this time, Jesus says that the ones who record, scribes, are the masters of the house with new and old treasures. The oddity here is that Jesus talks about newer treasure before the older treasure. Jesus is showing us that His work as the Christ who brings the kingdom at hand is the gateway to understanding the Torah, the prophets, and the writings, what we Christians call the Old Testament. The scribes are the ones who have recorded what has happened, and they will remember Jesus’ words, and through them, all of the works of the Old Testament will become clear.

This is why Christians interpret the Old Testament through what Jesus has done. We look first to Christ before any other work in the Bible. All of Scripture is breathed out by the Holy Spirit and is useful for every good work, as Paul told Timothy. But interpretation is important, how we read these stories, and we do so first with Jesus in mind. For new believers, we would say they should know the gospels of Christ before reading other passages out of context. This is why we spend considerable time with Jesus in Matthew, because He is the center of our faith. When we get to heaven, we will meet Paul, James, John, Moses, David, Abraham, and many others, but we will worship at the feet of Jesus, the Son of God! Amen.

“Jesus concludes his parable discourse by asking the disciples whether they’ve grasped his teachings, and upon their affirmative response, he compares them to a household manager who retrieves both new and old treasures from storage. ([Matt 13:51-52](#)) This brief saying encapsulates how his followers should integrate his kingdom message with Israel’s scriptural heritage.

The “old” treasures represent the Law and the Prophets, while the “new” treasures embody the gospel of the kingdom and how Jesus’s disciples interpret and apply the Old Testament through his instruction.^[1] Notably, Jesus reverses the typical order by placing “new” before “old,” signaling that in God’s kingdom, the new reality established through Jesus sets the direction, yet the old covenant remains integral rather than discarded.^[2]

The parable distinguishes itself from other kingdom sayings by its emphasis on both continuity and renewal. Unlike the parable of the wineskins, where Jesus rejected Pharisaic traditions as obsolete, here the “old” represents something Christian teachers continue to treasure.^[1] This parallels Jesus’s teaching in [Matthew 5:17–48](#), where he affirmed that he came to fulfill rather than abolish the Law and Prophets, even as his instruction addressed a new covenant era.^[1]

Critically, the verb translated “brings out” implies that the scribe not only displays but distributes these treasures—they are neither hidden nor hoarded, but rather “passed out to others.”^[1] The parable thus envisions Christian teachers as stewards who actively share both the scriptural foundation and its kingdom fulfillment with others, making them instruments through whom God’s comprehensive redemptive story becomes intelligible to each generation.”⁴

Application

Understanding that we are Christians First would allow us to both live with the gratefulness that God has given us the invaluable gift of the Kingdom and encourage us to share more with others! Remember, church isn’t a building we go to, it’s a community we’re always a part of. Jesus isn’t just someone we talk about on Sundays. He’s the Savior we live for! Amen.

⁴ [1] Charles L. Quarles, [Matthew](#), ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022), [351–352](#).

[2] Thomas G. Long, [Matthew](#), ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, *Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), [159](#).