Kingdom Parables: Counting The Cost

Matthew 13:44-46
44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.
45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:
46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

A Costly Pursuit
- Every year the slopes of Mount Everest
  - are littered with the dead bodies
    - of failed climbers.
- The effort to climb the world’s highest mountain
  - is costly, all-consuming, and dangerous.
- At Everest’s highest point,
  - you are breathing in a third
    - of the amount of oxygen
      - you would normally breathe
      - due to the atmospheric pressure.
- But it’s not the lack of oxygen that kills.
  - Avalanches are the foremost cause of death,
    - followed by falls.
  - Winds on the mountain
    - have been recorded
      - at more than 200mph.
- At least one person has died on Everest
  - every year since 1969,
    - except in 1977.
- The safest year on Everest was 1993,
  - when 129 reached the summit
    - and eight died.
  - To put that in perspective,
    - 1 out of every 16 people
      - who attempted the climb
        - died in the process.
- The deadliest year for climbers of Everest
  - was 1996, when 15 died.
    - At that point an average
      - of 1 in 4 who attempted the climb
        - died before they reached the top.
- Today, the odds are a little better.
  - Still, for every 8 climbers that reach the summit,
there is 1 who dies in the process.

- Once you reach the summit,
  - the danger is not over yet.
    - Of those who stand on the world’s highest peak,
      - only 1 in 10 survives the climb
        - back down the mountain.
- More than 225 people have died
  - in the past three decades
    - trying to make the climb.
  - At least half of their bodies remain on the mountain
    - and will likely be entombed there forever.
- April 2014 saw the deadliest day in the mountain’s history
  - when an avalanche swept
    - sixteen people to their deaths.
- The bottom line is this:
  - If you want to see the view
    - from the world’s highest peak
      - then you must understand
        - that it is a costly pursuit.
  - No man does this lightly.
    - You must be willing to lay down your life.

A Costly Kingdom
- The terms kingdom of God,
  - kingdom of heaven,
    - and kingdom terms
      - that relate to the kingdom of God
        - appear nearly 150 times in Scripture.
- So, what is the kingdom of heaven?
  - It is a reference to God’s reign,
    - his authority to rule.
  - Where there is a kingdom,
    - there must be a king.
      - God is that king.

- When Jesus taught his disciples to pray,
  - in Matthew 6:10,
    - he instructed them to pray this way:
      - Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.
- Indeed the kingdom of God is the place
  - where God’s will is done,
    - fully and completely.
- Jesus, in his ministry speaks of the kingdom
  - as something that has already come
    - but he also speaks of it

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• as something that has not yet come.
• This is because the kingdom comes in stages.
  o First the kingdom came to earth in Jesus Christ.
    ▪ The incarnation was the place
    ▪ where heaven touched earth.
  o Then the kingdom came in power
    ▪ in the upper room
    ▪ on the day of Pentecost,
      ▪ and the church became
        ▪ the expansion of the kingdom of God.
• First the will of God was manifest
  o within the confines of one perfect life.
    ▪ Then the will of God was manifest
      ▪ in a multitude of people.
  o The church, drawn from
    ▪ every nation, tongue and kindred,
      ▪ has become the place
        ▪ where the will of God is realized.
• However, the Bible still refers to the kingdom
  o as a future tense realm
    ▪ that will come only
      ▪ with the return of Jesus Christ.
• Then, and only then,
  o will the will of God
    ▪ be fully realized
      ▪ in the whole world.
• However, our focus this morning is the church.
  o This is the kingdom of God
    ▪ as it exists in this world,
      ▪ right now.
  o This is the realm of those
    ▪ who have been bought
      ▪ with the blood of the lamb
        ▪ and have been empowered
          ▪ by the Holy Ghost.
        ▪ This is the church.

• To be a part of the kingdom
  o is the greatest opportunity
    ▪ that this life has to offer.
• There is nothing more fulfilling,
  o nothing that your heart longs for more
    ▪ than a relationship with Jesus Christ.
• However, as incredible as the kingdom is,
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- Much like the summit of Mount Everest,
  - it is the price that keeps many
    - from ever committing to the kingdom.

- Make no mistake,
  - this kingdom is a costly kingdom.
    - Jesus paid the price for our salvation.
      - The ransom for our souls was paid at Calvary.
  - However, that doesn’t mean that salvation
    - Won’t ever cost you anything.
  - No. You cannot earn your way into heaven.
    - But it costs something to follow Jesus.

- I’m not talking about a price
  - that you pay to obtain salvation.
    - That’s a price you could never pay.
  - It is a price that was paid
    - by the precious blood
      - of Heaven’s only spotless lamb.
  - However, without doubt,
    - godliness and righteousness
      - will exact a price from you.

- The cost of discipleship is very high.
  - True, the kingdom is available to us
    - only by grace through faith;
      - but genuine faith
        - means genuinely embracing
          - and yielding to God’s reign,
        - not simply acknowledging it
          - and then passing it by
            - as if it did not exist.

- The kingdom is a treasure,
  - and those who really believe in it
    - will sacrifice everything else in their lives
      - to obtain the treasure.

- Jesus often introduced
  - the everlasting truths of the kingdom
    - in the context of parables.

- These kingdom parables
  - often begin with the words,
    - “The kingdom of heaven in like...”

- For the next several weeks
  - we are going to work our way
    - through these kingdom parables
      - and explore what they tell us
        - about the kingdom of God.
This morning we are going to look
  at a pair of relatively short parables
    that appear in three consecutive verses
  in Mathew 13.

In these parables
  Jesus makes the point
    that the kingdom of God is a treasure
      that will cost you everything
    but that it is of such infinite value
      that it is well worth the sacrifice!

Hidden Treasure
  The first parable is so simple
    That it is contained in a single verse:

44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a
man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and
buyeth that field.

  Hiding treasures in a field
    was more common in antiquity
      than it is today.
  People today put their money in banks,
    or invest in stocks & bonds.
      In Jesus’ time there were no banks,
        and there were no stocks and bonds.
    There was no safe place
      to store your treasure.
  If an individual was fortunate enough
    to amass a treasure, of any value,
      it was up to them
        to find a way to hide it from thieves
          and preserve it until it was needed.
  Many times the treasure
    was placed in an earthen jar and buried.
      This was particularly true in times of war
        and political upheaval.
    When news arrived of an approaching army
      the wealthy would take
        whatever jewelry or money they had
          and bury it,
            hoping to return and retrieve it
              when the danger was over.
  However, there were certainly many times
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- When Jesus was introducing
  - the concept of the kingdom
    - to his disciples,
  - he told the story of a man
    - who, perhaps, is working
      - in another man's field.
- Though the bible does not tell us
  - what, exactly, he was doing,
    - I like to envision the man as a sharecropper.
  - He is plowing a field,
    - that is the source of his livelihood,
      - but the field is not his.
        - It belongs to another man,
          - a wealthier man.
  - As he is plowing,
    - he unearths a buried treasure.
  - We are not told what the treasure is,
    - but the story certainly conveys the fact
      - that the treasure is immensely valuable.
- So what does the man do?
  - Immediately he recognizes
    - that the field is not his
      - and if he tries to lay claim to the treasure,
        - the landowner will assert
          - his right of ownership,
            - and the treasure will be lost.
- So, immediately, he puts it back where he found it.
  - He doesn't inventory it.
    - He doesn't spend a lot of time
      - estimating the value.
  - No. One glance, one moment,
    - was all it took.
  - He knows, almost intuitively,
    - that the treasure is of such value
      - that he must do whatever is necessary
        - to obtain it.
• The only way to secure the treasure was to purchase the field.
  • However, this is not a man of means,
    o he doesn’t have any one thing
      ▪ that has enough value
        • to exchange for the field.
    o As a matter of fact,
      ▪ when he really begins to evaluate
        • the price of the field
      ▪ he realizes that it will take
        • the sum total
          o of everything that he possesses
            • to purchase the field.
• Jesus says that he sold all that he had
  o He liquidated everything
    ▪ that he owned in this world
      • to buy the field
        o and obtain the treasure.
• I want you to understand, this morning,
  o That ownership of the field
    ▪ does not come easily.
  o It involved a total reordering of priorities,
    ▪ a total re-evaluation of his life.
  o Everything must be focused
    ▪ on the single goal
      • of owning the field
        o where the treasure is hidden.
          ▪ Nothing less will suffice.
• The point of the parable
  o is obviously the absolute value
    ▪ of the kingdom,
  o it is worth surrendering everything
    ▪ to gain entrance to the kingdom.
• This parable is a statement
  o of the costliness of the kingdom,
    ▪ a call for radical discipleship,
      ▪ for abandoning everything
        o and taking up your cross
          ▪ to follow Jesus.
  o That is the point of the parable:
    ▪ The man found something so valuable
      • that he sold everything he owned
        o in order to get it.
• That is powerful enough on its own.
  o However, Jesus goes a step further,
    ▪ he says that it was with joy
      • that the man sold everything he had
        o to buy the field.

• Think about that for a moment.
  o There are a lot of things in my life
    ▪ that I could part with
      • that would not matter much
    ▪ but there are some things
      • that are precious to me.
  o It would hurt deeply to sell those things.
    ▪ Everyone has those kind
      of things in their lives.
    ▪ They are not always things
      of great financial value.
      • Sometimes they are simply things
        o that hold deep sentimental value.
  o Without a doubt, this man
    ▪ that Jesus talked about
      • had some of those kind of things in his life.
    ▪ Perhaps some family heirloom.
      ▪ Perhaps some childhood treasure.
        • Whatever it was,
          o he sold it.
            ▪ With Joy,
              • he sold it.

• Imagine the most valuable thing
  o that you possess
    ▪ and imagine how hard it would be to sell it.

• That’s the point of this parable,
  o the kingdom is worth more
    ▪ than the most valuable thing
      • that you possess,
    o indeed it is worth more
      ▪ than everything that you possess, combined!

• The man was so overjoyed,
  o so overwhelmed,
    ▪ by the value of the treasure
      • that he was eager to surrender
        o everything that he had
          ▪ in order to gain it.
        o With joy he sold all that he had.

Kingdom Parables: Counting The Cost
The Pearl of Great Price

- The second parable makes the same point in a different way:

45 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:*
46 *Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

- The Greek word for “merchant”
  - is a reference to a wholesaler,
    - the kind of man who would travel
      - from city to city,
  - searching through markets,
    - fishing ports
      - and trade fairs,
        - looking for high-grade pearls
          - to buy for resale.

- Our modern equivalent might be those folks
  - that search through old barns and attics,
    - hoping to find
      - among all the secondhand furniture
        - an overlooked treasure
          - that they can pick up at a bargain
            - and sell for a profit.

- This man is searching
  - for someone that has a pearl
    - of greater value than
      - the price that they are asking for it.
        - That’s how he makes his living.

- Pearls were very valuable in the first century.
  - They were as valuable as any precious gem.
    - They were the diamonds of that age.
- There value was determined by their rarity.
  - They were hard to obtain.
    - Free divers would gather them
      - from dangerous depths
        - in the Red Sea,
        - the Persian Gulf,
        - and the Indian Ocean.
  - Pearl divers would literally tie rocks to their bodies,
    - take one long, deep breath,
      - and jump off the side of a boat,
        - and scour the bottom for oysters
          - in search of a pearl.
Many did not survive the endeavor.
  - But they did it any way
    - because a single pearl
      - of perfect size and beauty
        - could be incredibly valuable.

Ancient reports tell of pearls
  - That were worth
    - what would be the equivalent of
      - tens of millions of dollars
        - in modern currency.

The merchant, in this story,
  - finds one of those pearls,
    - a pearl of great price.

Because he is a seeker of pearls,
  - he recognizes, immediately,
    - the value of the pearl
      - that he is looking at.
  - And, though the pearl was very costly,
    - he immediately determined
      - that it was more than worth the price.

Once again, we see a man
  - going and selling all that he has
    - to buy the treasure.

Unlike the itinerant farmer of the previous story,
  - the merchant was probably a man of means,
    - he had some things of value,
  - but the pearl was such an incredible treasure,
    - that the only way
      - that he could pay the price
        - was to sell everything that he owned.

If you know anything about investing,
  - you know that one of
    - the most important rules
      - is to diversify yours holdings.

The common wisdom says,
  - don't put all your eggs
    - in one basket.

However, that is exactly
  - what these two parables tell us
    - we should do.

These men sold everything
  - and invested it all
• in a single treasure,
  o a treasure that was likened
    ▪ to the kingdom of God.

Truths About the Kingdom
• Jesus told these two stories
  o because they teach several important truths
    ▪ about the kingdom of God.

• The first, and perhaps the most obvious lesson to be learned here
  o is that the kingdom is worth that much.
  o If you are ever going to put
    ▪ all of your eggs in one basket,
      ▪ this is the basket
        o that you want to invest in.
  o The kingdom of God is valuable
    ▪ beyond understanding.
  o Everything that this world
    ▪ deems worthwhile or important
      ▪ counts as nothing
        o compared to the exceeding value
          ▪ of being a part of his church.

• A relationship with Jesus Christ
  o is an eternal treasure
    ▪ that is rich beyond comparison.
  o It is a treasure incorruptible
    ▪ and undefiled
      ▪ that will never fade away.

• The kingdom of God is a heavenly treasure
  o buried in the field
    ▪ of this poverty-stricken,
      ▪ morally bankrupt,
        o broken world.
  o It is a the pearl of great price,
    ▪ a prize that is exceedingly more valuable
      ▪ than everything else in this world.

• The kingdom of God is that valuable.
  o The church is that important!

• Another lesson, that may not be as obvious,
  o is that the treasure of the kingdom
    ▪ is not readily apparent.
  o The treasure was hidden in a field.
    ▪ The pearl had to be sought after.
They weren't obvious to the casual observer.

Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 2:14
14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The true value of the kingdom of God  
- is hidden from the carnal mind.  

The worldly mind  
- that is preoccupied with  
  - the things of this world,  
  - never recognizes the value  
    - of the kingdom of God.  
- It never really understands  
  - Just how precious the treasure really is.

Another thing that these two parables teach us  
- is that, though the kingdom of God  
  - is a community of believers,  
- it is a treasure that must be  
  - personally appropriated.

The key figure in both parables is an individual.  
- An individual who discovers  
  - a tremendous treasure  
    - and determines to do  
      - whatever is necessary  
        - to obtain the treasure.

Both of these men  
- are willing to give up  
  - everything in their lives  
  - to obtain the treasure.

They must decide, for themselves,  
- that the treasure is worth the price.  
  - So it is with the kingdom of God,  
    - each person must purchase it  
      - for himself or herself.  
- No one else can buy it for you.  
  - You have to make up your mind,  
    - for yourself,  
      - that the treasure is worth the price.

The final lesson of these two parables  
- is that it doesn’t matter how you find the treasure,
• only that you do whatever is necessary to obtain it!

- In the first parable,
  - the man just stumbled across the treasure.
    - He was merely doing something
      - that perhaps he did every day.
  - And while in the field,
    - going about his business,
      - he stumbled across a fortune.

- In the second parable,
  - the merchant seeks the pearl,
    - knowing exactly what he’s looking for.
  - He was searching specifically
    - for valuable pearls.
  - He knew what he was seeking.
    - He wanted something genuine,
      - Something real,
        - Something of lasting value.

- These two men came to the kingdom
  - from different directions.
    - One was seeking it
      - and found that which he was seeking.
    - However, it took the other by surprise,
      - one day in an ordinary place
        - he discovered something extraordinary.

- The key is not so much
  - how you discover the treasure.

- The point of the stories
  - is the sacrifice that it takes
    - to obtain the treasure.

- That’s what really matters.
  - It doesn’t matter how you came
    - to the knowledge of the kingdom,
      - it only matters what you do with it!

- Both of these men considered the cost
  - and recognized that the value of the treasure
    - far outweighed everything else in the world.
  - Happily they sold everything
    - to obtain the treasure.

- Make no mistake.
  - This is the point that Jesus was making.
    - This is what the Lord requires
      - of those who would become
        - a part of his kingdom.
  - Consider the cost.
• Pay the price.
  • It takes total surrender
    o to obtain the treasure!

• There is no such thing as a partial purchase.
  o You can’t half way buy the treasure.
    • That’s why it never works
      o to live with one foot in the church
        o and one foot in the world.
  o No. The treasure demands more than that.
    • It demands your all.
      • It demands that you sell everything else
        o and invest yourself,
          • fully and completely,
            • in his kingdom!

• In many ways Jesus was telling his disciples
  o that embracing the kingdom of God
    • is a lot like gearing up to climb Mount Everest
      • you must be willing
        o to invest your whole life,
          • all of your living,
            • to the very point of death.

• Mount Everest is an expensive expedition.
  o It costs anywhere from $30,000 to $120,000
    • just to make one attempt.
  o Training for the climb
    • takes eight to twelve months full time,
      • at the minimum.
  o Before one even considers
    • climbing that mountain
      • they must have several years
        o of climbing experience.

• It is an expensive hobby.
  o And it is a dangerous pursuit.
    • But that doesn’t stop the thrill seekers.

• Think about it for a moment,
  o they risk everything to climb that mountain
    • with full knowledge
      • that 1 out of every 8 climbers
        o will die before they reach the summit.

• Every climber considers the cost
  o and has to reach the conclusion,
    • for himself or herself

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that the reward is worth the effort.

- It is astonishing to me
  - how many people are willing
    - to risk everything they have
    - and even their own lives
  - to accomplish a feat
    - that offers them no tangible reward
      - beyond self-satisfaction and pride.
  - To me the price is too high.
    - But for them, the treasure
      - of standing on the top of the world
        - is worth everything.

- That’s the point that Jesus is making
  - about the kingdom of God.
    - It will cost you everything.
      - But it is worth the price.
  - It is far and away worth more
    - than the view from the highest mountain
      - in the world.

- However, there are so many
  - who are simply not willing
    - to pay the price,
      - not willing to completely sell out,
        - not willing to lay down their lives,
          - in this world,
        - that they may obtain eternal life
          - in the next.
  - And that’s the price that every person has to pay.
    - Both the poor farmer of the first story
      - and the well-to-do merchant of the second story
        - paid the same price for the treasure.
          - It cost them everything!

- Jesus told his disciples:

Matthew 16:24-26

24 ... If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

- Think about it!
  - What in the world is worth missing heaven for?
    - What in the world is more valuable

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• than the treasure hidden in the field?
• Today, the kingdom is calling.
  o The treasure is still there,
    ▪ buried in the field of your life.
• The next move is yours.
  o Are you willing to pay the price?
• Consider the cost this morning.
  o Because, its going to cost you everything.
    ▪ Make up your mind,
      • right here, right now,
        o heaven is worth more
          ▪ than anything in this world.
  o Somebody needs to come to this altar this morning
    ▪ and lay down your life
      • to take up life eternal.