**Matthew 13:44-52**

"The kingdom of heaven is like 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. [45] "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, [46] who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. [47] "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. [48] When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. [49] So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous [50] and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [51] "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." [52] 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."

**“Treasured Beyond Measure”**

 Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Sandwiched in-between the parable of the weeds we heard last week and the closing parable today about the net, we have two very short parables by Jesus. Like those concentrated flavors that you can add to water, so the hidden treasure and pearl of great price are a concentrated Gospel. The shortest of parables actually give the greatest of comfort. First, all the talk by Jesus about a Final Judgment with pulling out the weeds and sorting out the bad fish can make us wonder if my salvation is secure. Second, the church will even bear sufferings at the present that might make us question if God truly is for us.

 Jesus spoke these parables not to the crowds, but for the benefit of His disciples, His Church, those called and who were following Him. Things were changing right before their eyes. This became clear right after telling these parables. They would head off to Nazareth where Jesus would be rejected by His hometown. Let alone, the crowds were starting to get smaller. Hostility was building against religious authorities. The disciples were confused, maybe a bit offended, and all felt stuck about what to do. Are we much different today? This is why that man in our parables who sold everything to buy what He wanted stands out. Comfort comes from Christ who claims us as the hidden treasure belonging to Him.

1. **On the surface, the claim of being hidden treasure never looks right because we are not the man.**
2. Unlike the man who finds the treasure, all we find are fears.
* More persecution of Christians has been in the past century than the rest of church history combined.
* Islam is unsafe, but a woman missionary to India told me Hindu monks were no less kind to pastors.
* The shift is also happening in our American society, private schools being challenged, Christians being denied a promotion or job for their beliefs, Christ is even being wiped out of family life.
* Fears abound because being “hidden” treasure means on the surface many times we only see the cross.
1. Unlike the man who hides the treasure again with joy, we hide what bothers us.
* Shame causes us to bury true doctrine of what Scripture teachers when “non-denominationalism” is the mantra for today.
* Bitterness quickly hides in our hearts when the Church does not add up to the image we expect it to be.
* Rather than confess our faults and lack of love, we conceal it away so the blame can be put on somebody else.
* We want to put away weakness and show strength, but that is a kind of despair refusing to suffer how the non-religious in society are growing.
1. Unlike the man who sells everything, we cannot redeem ourselves.
* Israel did not earn God’s favor for Moses said, “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you…”
* The Law still promises deliverance, but only buries us in accusation and judgment that never saves.
* We cannot justify ourselves to be the treasure because it has always been a gift received by faith.
* Like the disciples, we need comfort for on the surface the field looks distressing.
1. **Beneath the surface, the claim of hidden treasure belongs to Christ because He is the man for us.**
2. He has found us to be the treasure of His grace.
* This is what were in the plans of God before the foundations of the world.
* God found His way to us for, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”
* None other saw the hidden treasure, but Christ did saying, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).
* Christ conquers fears by forgiveness and exchanges His glory for the cross proving His grace will endure.
1. He is the man who also hides us to be that treasure of His joy.
* Since we died with Christ by baptism, He has no shame to teach true doctrine because the truth abides in Him.
* Christ blesses His Church at all times so that a better promise triumphs over bitters as St. John reminds us, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared” (1 John 3:2)
* If our value as hidden treasure comes from Christ, then the blame game devalues us, while the joy of Christ enlivens with forgiveness.
* Christ even shows suffering is not weakness for He put on humility refusing to despair over our salvation.
1. This man who is God gives everything for us to be the treasure of His love.
* As Israel, so God’s favor is a pure gift for St. Paul tells us, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”
* The Law buries us, but the Gospel raises us with good news worked by Jesus.
* You are justified to be the treasure, because the death and resurrection of Jesus has made full payment for Him to claim you.
* By Word and Sacrament God keeps comfort alive not for a show, or emotional high, but because beneath the surface Jesus sees us as the treasure.

 Whether it is questions over present sufferings or hesitation about the Final Day of Judgment, the shortest parables come to give the greatest comfort. A modern day Christian artist [Edward Riojas](https://www.facebook.com/Edward-Riojas-Artist-240877282618417/?hc_ref=ARQPbtYQ-ZGyFN3HYQF076PgPmAgkwCs7t9ggMTae2fkxDlC60OI7jT8N7npn_3V9_M&fref=nf) has a painting that reflects on the hidden treasure in a brilliant way. He has Jesus at a cemetery pulling a coffin out of the ground marked with a cross. Below that picture you read, “in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” Only by grace through faith does any belong to a kingdom that cannot fail. Comfort comes from Christ who claims us as the hidden treasure belonging to Him. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.