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Buried Treasure

Matthew 13:44-46

Prayer: *Father, we just thank you for the joy that is you. I thank you, Lord, that joy is going to be an integral part of what we're looking at this morning as well. And so we just, again, thank you for the fact that you are the joy in our hearts. And so we pray this morning, Lord, that we have not only the joy but your Holy Spirit, Lord, that you would be guiding us, that you'd be coming alongside us, opening up your word to us, enabling us to make it of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we've been looking at the parables of Jesus and we've seen that many of them were what one commentator said sermon illustrations without a point. We looked at the sower and the seeds, we looked at the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven and the bread and we've been studying them now for a number of weeks. And they really do sound like a group of disconnected stories until you connect them with Jesus's intent. But we realize that when Jesus delivered them, he never gave his intent. And only when his disciples pressed him privately did he tell them what the

point of his stories was. And we said many, many times, can you imagine how bizarre this was for his hearers?

You know when Bob Dylan first broke on the music scene, I mean, if you didn't get where he was going, you could kind of follow him and follow the music because he left all kinds of mystical references. I mean, the thing is you could at least move along with him and get an idea of where he was going, but Jesus goes full mystical on these crowds at a time when he's at the peak of his popularity. His references, they weren't just cryptic, they were far, far beyond that, they were absolutely incomprehensibly mystifying. And we go back to the soils and the seeds and he's speaking to this giant crowd that's assembled to hear his wisdom and he's telling him that birds are going to eat seed on the side of the road and that rocky soil is lousy and thorny soil is lousy and here's some news, good soil is good for plants, and then he leaves. And he leaves them with these parting words, he says, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*" You say, this is his wisdom? This is wisdom for an agrarian culture? I mean, with Dylan's songs, at least you get pointed in a certain direction as to what he's trying to say, but with Jesus's illustrations, you got absolutely nothing. Jesus gave no hints, he gave no explanations, no one had the slightest idea what his point was. And hence, we have the familiar plea of his disciples that we see in *Matthew 13:10*. It says: "*Why do you*

“speak to them in parables?” And then we have Jesus' even stronger and stranger response. It says: *And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."*

We've looked at the first four parables which Jesus gave without explanation at all to a crowd that had gathered to hear him, a crowd so large he has to speak from a boat, and we recognize this comment from *Matthew 13*. It says this, it says: *All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS KEPT SECRET FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."* Then Jesus sent the multitude away and he went into the house. And his disciples came to Him, saying, once again, *"Explain to us to us the parable of the tares of the field."* Jesus then gives them a point by point explanation of why he spoke that way and what he meant. And so far we've looked at all four of these parables that Jesus has spoken and so now at least we know, I hope we know a little bit more about what Jesus was speaking about. But having given this explanation again, he then gives the disciples three more parables, and again, with no explanation. He says: *"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." Well, Jesus gives them a third parable then I want to focus on what he asks them next, he asks them an extremely difficult question. He asked the disciples in verse 51: "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." Sure. No problem. Clear as day, we get it.

You know, if there ever was a "yes" that begged explaining, it was the disciples' "yes" that they gave to Jesus. I mean it's 2,000 years later and we're still trying to fully grasp what Jesus is saying. You know, you could say maybe the disciples were given divine inspiration at that moment. Maybe they were blowing smoke. I suspect they were blowing smoke because they'd done that many, many times before. Working back, do you remember when Jesus tells the disciples, he says: *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees"* and they all get together and they're huddling, they're trying to figure out, oh, I get it, he's upset because we ran out of bread. It wasn't even close. So Jesus rebukes them for the lack of faith. This is in *Matthew 16* it says: *But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many*

baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Well, I have to say, I have a great deal of sympathy for the disciples. And I put myself in their shoes and if Jesus asked me if I understood the things that he had said, I'd be afraid to tell him I didn't. But there's a problem in saying that to Jesus, and the problem is that Jesus can see right into your heart. *Hebrews 4* says: *No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* See, God tells us that there's nothing about us that's in the slightest way hidden from him, but there's much about him that is hidden from us, and that upsets and offends many. *Proverbs 25* says: *It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.* And we have to agree, Jesus concealed many, many matters, and it offended many and that included his disciples. Jesus just refused to play by our rules, and our rules say if you've got something good to say, then for heaven's sake, say it. Let people know what's going on. Well, the disciples had spent many years learning that Jesus wasn't just something good, that he was unlike any other person on earth, that he had this power and this strength and wisdom and honor and glory and at this point he

has every single person hanging on his every word. And right in the middle of that circumstance he starts telling stories that make absolutely no sense at all, because none of them have any point. And one could easily get the impression that Jesus is being purposely obtuse or coy, that he's just hiding himself behind these clever riddles. But we think like humans. And He thinks like God. And as God he knew the intent of our hearts. Imagine what it was like for him, I mean, imagine everyone -- having everyone's thoughts and intents kind of plastered on their foreheads like those running signs that you see in Times Square or the scroll at the bottom of a news broadcast. I mean Jesus saw it all. I mean *Matthew 9* says "*he knows our thoughts.*" I just wonder how different we looked to him than he looked to us.

Well, our parable this morning actually reflects that difference. This is a parable about the value of the kingdom of God. *1 Corinthians 13* tells us that *we see through a glass darkly*, meaning that we perceive truths as Christians but we see that vaguely, dimly compared to what we're going to see when we get to heaven. What Jesus saw with crystal clarity we see, again, dimly. We know there's a treasure there but we also know that it's hidden. We just don't realize the extent of its worth. And this is what Jesus is trying to teach his disciples, I mean, he separated them from the crowd, he brings them inside, this is going to be a private

teaching. And what he tells them is one of the most frustrating and glorious truths there is about the kingdom. He says this in *Matthew 13:44*. He says: *"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."* So Jesus is telling the disciples and he's telling us as well, he says, the kingdom is really a treasure. And he goes on to tell them what kind of treasure it is, how you can find it and how you can know that what you found is real.

So first let's look at the kingdom as a treasure. The kingdom's a treasure but it is a hidden treasure. Think first of what Jesus knew about all of the hidden treasures that surrounded him, all of the hidden treasures of creation. *Colossians 1* tells us the son was actually the creator of the universe. Just try to imagine what his eyes had already seen. You know in *Job 38* Jesus, as the pre-incarnate son, he's challenging Job about the creation that surrounds him. And in verse 4, he says: *"Where were you, Job, when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone -- while the morning stars sang together and*

all the angels shouted for joy?" It was Jesus who laid that cornerstone. In verse 16 he says: *"Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this."* Jesus knew this because he was there. In verse 31 he says: *"Can you bind the chains of Pleiades? Can you loosen Orion's belt? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?"* There's only one person who could ask that question and that's Jesus, because he's the one who did it. He's the one who set the stars in its place. I mean Jesus knew all about stars, he knew all about black holes, he knew all about nuclear fission because he was the creator of all of those things. And we think somehow that if we've accomplished something scientifically when we discover some kind of method or process that God, the Son, used in creating. *Colossians 1:16* says: *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.* So all things including black holes were created by him and for him. That's just amazing to consider.

In 1953 Francis Crick announced that he and James Watson had found they had discovered the secret of life. And what Watson and Crick had discovered was how the double helix of DNA actually worked and for that though received fame and fortune and a Nobel Peace Prize. But understand something, Watson and Crick didn't originate DNA, they didn't devise it, they didn't create it. Jesus created it. I mean that incredibly complex molecule that regulates all of cellular life was just one expression of the Son's creative genius, and this is a tiny little fraction of the treasures of his creation, all of which he hid. In fact they were hidden for centuries. I mean it's the glory of God to conceal a matter, some of which, like DNA, we're just learning about 2,000 years after he created it or after we -- he spoke about it or after we understood it. I mean there's all kinds of hidden parts to his creation and that also includes this other kingdom that Jesus said was not of this world.

I mean think about this again from Jesus's perspective. How do you instruct fallen human beings about a kingdom that they have no frame of reference for whatever? I mean, how do you even -- how do you even describe it? You do what Jesus did. You resort to analogies. You use analogy to give some kind of natural frame of reference to a supernatural kingdom. Hence, Jesus repeatedly says "*the kingdom is like.*" The kingdom is like wheat and tares, it's

like a mustard seed or leaven or buried treasure or this fabulous pearl that he's speaking about because analogy is the best you can do. Jesus has to say it's like something natural because we'll never get what it really is on our own because in reality it's supernatural. It's an impossible task that Jesus has. Try teaching your dog how to play checkers. You'd probably resort to analogies as well. You say, well, the kingdom of checkers is like a game of fetch and you try to fetch your other partner's pieces. And you'd try to kind of work through that analogy and you'd realize that it's an impossible thing because dogs and humans are way too far apart. I mean, dogs are too far below us to get us even when it comes to checkers. Well, understand, this is what Jesus is trying to do with us.

In *John 16* Jesus is instructing his disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit, and he says in verse 12, he says: "*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.*" The disciples literally could not bear full disclosure. So what does Jesus do? Well, he resorts to yet another analogy. He says: "*The kingdom is like a treasure buried in the field.*" So as we're looking and working our way through this particular parable, the first thing we notice is, to me at least, it seems to have a cultural problem. I mean, I don't know about you but I have a problem with this guy's reaction, I mean, something seems vaguely unethical about finding a

treasure and then re-burying it and then buying the field and claiming that it's yours. I mean it seems to violate the ethics of full disclosure.

Well, there's more to the story than we understand when we first look at it. To understand a little bit more of it, you have to understand a little history and a little bit about Jewish law. You see, John MacArthur points out that what the finder of this treasure does is not only ethical, but it goes way beyond, it goes the extra mile in terms of ethics, and here's why. You see, in those days, in that place there was no such thing as a bank, and there was very little security and if you had anything of value, it was literally at the mercy of thieves. So the safest place to bury things or to hide things was in a field, in some spot that only you or your closest friends knew about. And we see that referred to. If you remember the parable of the talents, you remember the one talent servant, this is *Matthew 25:18*, it says: "*But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*" I mean, the ground was the local bank. And it really wasn't that unusual to find lost valuables in a field. Someone might have died, someone could have lost track of what it was he had buried. And so finding something in a field is not that unusual. In fact, the Jews of that day had a formalized rule for finding that kind of treasure, and the rule was this, as long as

you own the field, it was finders keepers, losers weepers. That's just the way it worked.

But to go back to this parable, we find this man finding the treasure and what does he do? He re-buries it. He sells all that he has and then he buys the field. You got to understand the very act of buying the field normally would have tipped off the owner of the field. I mean if he was using the field as a bank at that point, he would know I got to go dig that stuff up, somebody wants to buy this field. So he would dig up the treasure and then he would sell the field. And again, if he doesn't dig it up, then obviously the treasure isn't his. Then it becomes finders keepers, losers weepers. Well, a less than scrupulous man would not have reported anything, I mean, he certainly would not have risked re-burying the treasure. He would have dug it up and said, "Hey, look what I got," and with that money he just would have bought the field and no one would have been the wiser. But this man doesn't do that. He sells everything he has to purchase the field and legally own the treasure, and it says he does this joyfully. Well, the point is the treasure, it's hidden, it's unseen and because it's hidden and unseen, it has no value. And the only one who knows the value of that field is the one who discovers the treasure that it contains. To everyone else it's pretty much worthless. Do you see what Jesus is getting at here? You see, for three years

running now he's been telling the disciples all about the buried treasure of the kingdom of God. And for the most part this treasure is still buried because it's more really than they can bear. It's only after the resurrection that the disciples really do finally get it. Remember after Jesus's resurrection in Luke 24 we see him on the road to Emmaus, and he's speaking to two distraught disciples, and he remarks how foolish and slow of heart they were and then beginning with Moses and the prophets he starts opening the scriptures to them. You know what Jesus was doing right then and there? He's kind of like opening up the treasure box, he's showing them what's really there. And the disciples said in *Luke 24:32*: *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"* See, Jesus is showing them treasures that others could not see. And in a very real sense our task today is the same as Jesus's task was, and it may be even more difficult. We proclaim the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed to the same kind of hearts that he proclaimed it to. And to those hearts, the treasure of the kingdom remains hidden, it remains unseen, and it remains unvalued. I've said many, many times one of the greatest frustrations in my life is knowing that we have the secret of eternal life and we have the secret of joy and contentment and wisdom and power not just for now but for eternity. Nobody wants it. Nobody cares. I mean the treasure is still buried. Now how we find it is where this other

parable comes in.

Let me read them both again. It says: *"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."* See, both men realize that they've stumbled on hidden treasure, something whose value is known by them but not known by anybody else. But there's a difference here, and the difference is that one man stumbles on the treasure by accident, I mean, he just happens to find it in a field, while the other man seeks it out. He's a merchant. He's knowledgeable, he knows what the treasure is when he sees it. He just hasn't seen it yet. But when he sees it, he, too, sells everything to buy that treasure. And what we get from this is that sometimes we find the treasure and other times the treasure finds us, but every time it is God's sovereign hand that's guiding the process. Jesus says: *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day."* He said to his disciples in *John 15:16*: *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit -- fruit that will last -- and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."* If I didn't know that bedrock truth, I

don't think I could go on. I just I hate the fact that I cannot convince others of the hidden treasures of the kingdom. I hate the fact that I don't have that power. And what really, really is at the bottom line, the reason for that hatred is because I know the consequences of unbelief. I mean there are only two types of people in this world, there are those who have Christ and those who desperately need Christ. There's no other category. Before God every one of us is desperately needy and the reason why is because none of us is good, according to Romans 3:10. And the vast majority of us just convince ourselves that our goodness is good enough and it's not. Jesus once spoke to the church at Laodicea in *Revelation 3*. He said this: *"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."* You see, this gold and the white clothes and the salve that opens eyes, these are all parts of this treasure that God has for us, but it's a treasure that's only available to those who recognize that they're spiritually blind, naked and poor. Now when Jesus said in *Matthew 5*: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"* he was addressing the most basic requirement that there is for entry into the kingdom of God. As Dane Ortlund puts it, and I

repeat this quote every single communion because I think it is so perfectly apt, it describes so perfectly what Jesus is trying to say about being poor in spirit. He says, "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." See, we have to see ourselves as God sees us, and that's not pretty.

In *Isaiah 64* God makes this astounding statement. He says: *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.* You know, the really amazing part of that statement is God says that all of our righteous acts are as filthy rags. I mean, God's not singling out the worst thing you've ever done, he's singling out the very best you've ever done. All our righteous deeds, all the very best you've ever done, those things are filthy, polluted rags in God's eyes. You say are you kidding? How can that be? That's because God's standard of what goodness is is absolute transcendent flawlessness. I mean that goodness makes the very best of our good deeds look filthy, and we hate that because we're proud. And that's why God's treasure goes hidden, unseen and unvalued. I mean it's a treasure that nobody wants because it's a treasure nobody thinks they need. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and then he died a monstrous death on

the cross to take our place and our penalty so that we could have that treasure. And yet most folks still turn their nose up at it without giving it a second thought. And they do that at their peril. Listen to what God says in *Hebrews 10*. He says: *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. You know, I said insulting the Spirit of grace here. The RSV translates it a little different, it says, outraging the Spirit. What both of those translations say is that refusing the gospel is tantamount to trampling the Son of God underfoot. It is scorning what God says is treasure. And when Jesus told the crowds about the kingdom of God, he was addressing really only a small fraction of those that he was calling out to. It was that tiny little subgroup who valued the treasure. In *Matthew 22* Jesus says "Many are called but few are chosen." Well, we're called to do the*

exact same thing, I mean, we are in fact doing what Jesus did, we have the exact same task, we are called on to call the many but God within that many will call his own. And CH Spurgeon once said: "If God painted a stripe on his elect, I'd spend my time lifting up shirttails to see who had the stripe. But he didn't. So I'll just preach the gospel and let God decide."

Most of the folks that I speak to don't see any treasure at all in the gospel, I mean, they act threatened or bored or indifferent to its claims. And then there's another category. There's another group of merchants looking not for a pearl of great price but for bargain pearls that they can buy for next to nothing. These are not the ones that Jesus was talking to. The man in the field and that merchant seeking pearls were those kind of people that Jesus was talking to. They knew they had treasure worth everything they owned but it was hidden and it was unseen and unvalued. So how do they find it? Well, the answer is they didn't. The answer is it found them. And whether we stumble on to the treasure as I did years ago or diligently seek is it as the merchant did, we value the treasure not out of some kind of inherent wisdom in us but solely and completely due to the grace of God. *Ephesians 2:8: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast.*

All right. So if the treasure is hidden and we don't find it, rather it finds us, how do we know that we found the real treasure? Well the answer to that is actually very simple and it really just comes down to one word, one word that we sang about this morning. It says about the man in the field, "*In his joy sold all that he had and bought the field.*" You see, you know you have found treasure when you value that treasure more than anything else in the world and that only happens when the grace of God opens your eyes to the gift of God. I mean it's important to note how that man in the field sold everything that he had to buy it, it says "in his joy" he went and sold all that he had and bought the field. I mean, this wasn't a quid pro quo. By the way, that's just a fancy Latin name for a bargain. In Latin it means "this for that." We don't do quid pro quos with God. We don't trade with God. I mean it's not my life for your kingdom because the best of my life is a pretty lousy bargain. It's still filthy rags. It's hardly a bargaining chip because its value is below zero in terms of its inherent goodness. I mean the man's joy came from realizing how huge the treasure was, how bankrupt he was and how wonderful it would be to own that treasure. I mean the man and the merchant couldn't wait to give up everything they had because they saw everything else in their lives as a pittance compared to that treasure.

And so I guess the question that we need to ask this morning is how do you see that treasure? I mean Jesus is telling us all of these parables, he's trying to get us to see it, he's trying to get us to understand what this kingdom is all about. But he didn't just tell us parables, he also had some genuine encounters that are highly illustrative. Jesus had an encounter with a rich young man in *Matthew 19*. Let me just read to you what took place. It says: *Now behold, one came to him and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."* He said to Him, *"Which ones?"* Jesus said, *"'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,' 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,' 'YOU SHALL NOT STEAL,' 'YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS,' 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER' and, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'"* The young man said to Him, *"All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"* Jesus said to him, *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."* But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Scripture said the man went away sorrowful because of all that he owned and all of the wealth that he had. Oscar Wilde may have said that this young man was by definition a cynic. Wilde once famously said: "A cynic was a man who knew the price of everything and the

value of nothing." And that rich young man was certainly that. And he and the man who finds the treasure in the field had one great thing differentiating them. It's what we call "grace." You see, the rich young man didn't receive the grace that showed him the value of the kingdom, at least in this particular encounter that he has with Jesus, and like a true cynic, all he can see is the cost, so he goes away sad. Well, the man in the field is gloriously given the grace to see the enormity of the value of the treasure that he's found and he sees that it's so great and so vast that he can't wait to divest himself of every single bit of his earthly worth in order to obtain it. He sells everything joyfully in order to obtain it. I mean you see that difference. The rich young man came to Christ convinced of his own goodness, and he says to him in response to living up to the ten commandments, he says, *"All these things I've done from my youth."* You know what Jesus could have said right then and there was, "liar. You not only lied to me, you lied to yourself." No one can keep these commandments for a day let alone from their youth. But instead Jesus does something different. Just like he did on the Sermon on the Mount, he expands the demands of the law to include something that he's really never demanded of anybody else. He demands of this young man complete poverty. Jesus tells the rich young man he's got to sell everything he owns and give it to the poor. Well, he never demanded that of anybody else. So why do you suppose he did that?

Well, Jesus is just trying to show him that his goodness isn't good enough. I mean, the reason why Jesus focused in on his wealth was because he was obviously rich but he could have focused in on any other quality, he could have focused in on his thought life or the way he treated his servants or his covetousness, it wouldn't have mattered, he would have failed. Because Jesus was trying to say if you're going to come to me in your own goodness, then that goodness has got to be transcendentally flawless because God is transcendentally flawless and your goodness is not. And because it's not, you, too, will go away sorrowfully unless you fall fully into the grace of God. And therein lies this great divide. You see, the man in the field and the merchant gladly give up everything they have for the kingdom. The rich young man knows the cost of everything but the value of the kingdom completely escapes him. He very carefully calculated the cost benefit ratio and he decided the cost is just a little too high. And you know, we think, maybe, we think that, oh, if I was in that situation, I would do differently. It would be easy for me to make that kind of a decision if I was confronted by Jesus that way. But understand, God gives us the exact same choice every day. Jesus said in *Matthew 6*: *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."* What Jesus is saying here is really kind of the bottom line, he says, you know the treasure you value by knowing

which one you are devoted to. The rich young man had made his choice long before he had this confrontation with Jesus. Jesus only forced him to recognize it, and that's what saddened him. Well, the same is true for us as well. And the hard and the scary question we have to ask ourselves is what kingdom am I devoted to? And what kingdom do I really -- don't admit it, but what kingdom do I actually despise? And are we the man in the field? Are we the merchant with the pearl or are we the rich young ruler?

And another question to ask if you're asking yourself that question is: Is everything about this all or nothing? Is that what God is demanding of us? And we look at scripture, we see time and time again we see Jesus demanding a level of commitment that looks on paper like it's absolutely everything or nothing. Let me just read to you what Jesus says in *Luke 14*. He says this: *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it -- lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'*

Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

Sure looks to me like Jesus is saying if you're not all, you're nothing. I mean, do you have to make that choice? Do you have to choose between the man in the field and the rich young ruler? I was praying about this and the Lord spoke to me about it. Not verbally, that's never happened yet, I assure you. I'll let you know if it does. But I've been praying about my own heart, I'm praying constantly that God would give me a deeper passion for his kingdom. And the way God answered that prayer was his answer to this dilemma of all or nothing, and it was really kind of a duh moment. What God was saying to me is what is the point of praying for a deeper commitment if you think that my demand is all or nothing? You see, if you're praying for a deeper commitment, then you clearly realize you're not all, and if it's really all or nothing, then it's going to always be nothing 'cause you're not capable of all. Nobody is.

Well, what makes up the difference? First, last and always, it's

grace. It's grace. You see, we know that we don't find the treasure and that the treasure finds us. And when it finds us, it fills us with the Spirit of Christ and it is His Spirit that gives us the passion and the heart that sees the kingdom as the greatest treasure there is. And when you actually see it through the Spirit of Christ who is inside you, you joyfully are willing to give up everything to get it. So the question really isn't how much are you willing to give up for the kingdom. The question is much more: How highly do you value the kingdom? Is it hidden treasure worth everything you own to possess or is it something of uncertain cost and unknown value that you're constantly trying to assess? I mean, if you find yourself constantly asking what's this going to cost me? What's it going to cost me in terms of my time or my money or my reputation? Then you need to consider whether or not Jesus is confronting you just like he did the rich young ruler. See, if you have the Spirit of Christ inside you, you have a sense of the value of that kingdom. And you may fail hundreds of times in selling everything that you have in order to possess it, but you know in your heart of hearts that it's the greatest treasure you will ever own. That's a gift. That's grace. And if you don't feel like this kingdom is really anything of great value to you, then perhaps the Spirit of Christ isn't really in you. But you don't have to go away sad just like that rich young ruler did, I mean, you need to humble yourself and you need to ask God for the gift of that grace.

Again: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* So God is tapping you on the shoulder right now and he's saying, hey, you are that rich young man right now and I want to talk with you. And you want some clarity on that, speak to us, speak to me, speak to anyone after the service. See, we have the privilege of knowing that that hidden treasure is no longer hidden. What we need to know and to continually grow is our heart's desire for the kingdom to be the greatest treasure on earth for us and for that we need to pray. So let's pray.

Father, I just I thank you for grace. I thank you that without your grace all of us are hopelessly lost. Lord, each and every one of us needs to recognize that none of us is good enough. If we were to come to you with our own goodness, we would have to be rejected because it's not flawless. And, Lord, I thank you that it's not all or nothing because just the very fact that we want to grow is recognition of the fact that we're not there, we're not all, but it's not nothing, and it's not nothing because the Spirit of Christ is in us desiring that it would be all. So Father, I pray that you would not only put that desire in us if it's not there in the first place, but that you would grow it and that it would become our passion and that we would see that the greatest treasure there is on earth is the kingdom. I pray this in Jesus'

name. Amen.