

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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The Joy of Kingdom Citizenship

Matthew 13:44

Prayer: *Greetings to you at Grace here, to those of you who are sitting at home watching us on You Tube, we want to just thank you and praise God for this opportunity that we have to come together. I just want to remember again Ellen as she is going through her chemo, just continue to give her all the grace and strength that she needs. We just again want to pray as we begin to open up your word, Lord, that you would be here, that you would guide us. We have this incredible privilege of opening up your book and of learning of the great truths that are contained therein and we can't do that without the presence of your Holy Spirit. And so we pray for your Spirit to be here, to guide us, to give us the ability to open up your word and to make it of living value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we have been looking at the kingdom of God, and in part one we looked at what the kingdom is. We saw that it is summed up by one line from the Lord's prayer: *"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."* And we saw that it was our task to forcibly advance

the kingdom of God against the forces that are arrayed against it.

In part two we looked at how we go about that task. We looked at three things that kingdom citizens concern themselves with and that is our strategy, our weapons, and our objective. And we saw first that our strategy is to demonstrate the manifold wisdom of God in our daily lives, I mean, we learned that we are the billboards that God uses to display his wisdom on. We learned that our weapons are to be prayer and scripture, and finally that our objective was simply to be faithful to the tasks that God has entrusted us with. So far we looked at what the kingdom is, we've looked at what the kingdom does and today we're going to look at what motivates kingdom citizens.

Jesus took great pains to help us to understand what moves and motivates kingdom citizens to change their loyalties literally from one kingdom to another. And to put it simply, we get overtaken by the love of God. See, the first thing that we have to understand is that the love that we have for God and his kingdom, that love does not come from us. It actually comes from God himself. We go back to *Ezekiel 36* which says: *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give*

you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Well five times in that passage God describes our heart attitude toward the kingdom as something that he has produced in us, something that he continually produces in us. I will sprinkle, I will cleanse, I will give you a new heart, I will remove your old heart. God says I will change the very way you relate to everything, including the way you look at my word and my kingdom. He says I will give you a spirit of obedience that finds its ultimate pleasure in following after Me. God makes it crystal clear that the desire to serve the kingdom comes from his Holy Spirit. It's the Spirit of God that moves us to follow his decrees and be careful to keep his laws, and God takes great pains to tell us that when we become a believer, his Holy Spirit takes up residence within us and begins the process of controlling us. *Romans 8* says: *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.* And the scripture goes on to say that in fact if God's Holy Spirit is not indwelling you, then you are not a Christian. *And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Christ.* I mean you understand what God is saying here, he's not saying that Christians are these spirit-controlled zombies and everyone else is reveling in some kind of personal freedom. In fact he's saying the opposite is exactly true. God says this world is filled with folks who are in

actuality mind-numbed robots. These are folks who think they're absolutely free when in fact they're ruled and controlled not by their freedom but by their sin nature. *Romans 8:5* says: *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires.* I think it was R.C. Sproul who pointed out the myth that most people swallow that they are in essence free to make their own choices. He pointed out that we are in actuality instead of being free, slaves, slaves to our own desires. We are the pawns of our greatest desire at the moment and no matter how much we think otherwise, it's our own innate desires that control us. I think we confuse our wills and our desires all the time. My will, my will may well be to lose ten pounds but my desire may well overrule my will when it comes to an ice cream cone. I mean my will says I need to lose ten pounds, my desire says well, that ice cream cone is irresistible. You see in the end it's our desires that drive us to do what we do, even things that we most definitely don't want to do at all. I mean Sproul went on to say if someone came up to you and he put a gun to your head and he said, "Your money or your life," you might think that he's the one who is driving you, not your own desires, but you'd be incorrect. It's still your own desires driving you. You'd still be wanting according to your own desires, but those wants would instantly shift from wanting to lose weight or something else to wanting to stay alive. And because you want to stay alive, your desire is now

to give this person your money. You see how your desires affect every single thing that you do?

The apostle Paul pointed out that even his life was ruled by desires that he couldn't really control in his flesh. In *Romans 7* he said: *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.* Paul says he knows what the right thing to do is but the sinful desires of the flesh, they overwhelm his ability to carry it out. And he goes on to say: *So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* You see the whole world, the whole world outside of the kingdom lies condemned under the control of their own desires. But if you know Christ like Paul does, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.* So what God is saying is it's a

binary choice. You're either controlled by your sinful nature or you are controlled by the Holy Spirit. He says: *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

Okay. So let me make this personal. The good news is that the life that is controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. The bad news or the unsettling news, if you want to call it that, is really this question of control. I mean we're looking to find out what motivates kingdom citizens and it's pretty obvious that we desperately need an objective definition of what that word "controlled" really means, because it's obvious that the word "controlled" defines a kingdom citizen. The unsettling part, that comes from asking ourselves, okay, but how controlled by the Holy Spirit do I have to be? A hundred percent? Eighty? Sixty? Twenty? You see truth be known, many of us just want to know how worldly can I really be and still be in the kingdom? I mean if the kingdom of God was a physical place with physical borders, I think many of us would be camped out right on that border so that we could walk with one foot firmly in the kingdom and one foot firmly in the world. And I don't say that to dump on anybody, I say that

because that's a sad fact in my life as well. I mean I often wonder if I'm someone walking with one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom, so I therefore perceive perhaps incorrectly that that's a sad fact in everybody's life. Jesus warned us, he warned us against trying to serve two masters because he understood our hearts. He said: *"No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and money."*

Here's Jesus describing a binary choice and it's all about motivation. And what he's saying is there's no halfway measures here. He says you pick a kingdom, and the kingdom that you pick becomes the one you're devoted to and the kingdom you don't pick is the one you despise. So we have to ask ourselves, am I devoted, am I devoted to the kingdom of God? Do I despise the kingdom of this world? Well you say, oh, you're making way too stark of a choice. I mean you're positing some somehow or other God expects you to become some kind of religious zealot who has this hatred for the world. Well that's not quite how God puts it but it may be closer than we're comfortable with. See, God knows our hearts. And because he knows our hearts, he defines the motivation of kingdom citizens in terms of our hearts. He defines it in terms of what we value most highly. Listen to how God puts this in *Matthew 13*. He says: *"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." There are three little words in that statement that contain the key to understanding what kingdom motivation is all about, and those three words are "*in his joy.*" Jesus is describing someone who's not the slightest but reluctant about proclaiming his loyalty to one kingdom over another, and he takes everything that he owns and he sells it all and he does it joyfully. And that word "joyfully" is the key to understanding what motivates kingdom citizens.

Now before we tackle that word "joyfully," let me just look at what Jesus is teaching us about the kingdom through these parables. We looked at these awhile back and I asked back then, I said, how do you instruct fallen human beings about a kingdom that they have no frame of reference for whatsoever? I mean how do you even describe it? Well you do what Jesus did. You resort to analogies. You do that in order to give some natural frame of reference to a supernatural kingdom. So we have Jesus repeatedly saying "*the kingdom of heaven is like.*" I mean, it's like wheat and tares, it's like a mustard seed or leaven or buried treasure or a fabulous pearl. See, Jesus has to use similes to say it's like something natural because we'd never get what it really is on our own because in reality it is supernatural. I mean try teaching your dog how to play checkers. Just think about it. That's your task. You might

try to convince him, okay, the game of checkers is like a game of fetch. You're trying to fetch your partner's pieces. You know it's not going to work. But you know you'd be using a simile to bridge the gap. See the problem is dogs and humans are too far apart and so they're not going to get us even when it comes to checkers. But understand in a sense this is what Jesus was dealing with with us. I mean in *John 16* he's instructing his disciples about the coming Holy Spirit and he says: "*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.*" The disciples couldn't bear full disclosure. They couldn't handle it. They couldn't handle any aspect of the kingdom that was complete and full because it was so far above their limited human experience. When Paul says we see through a glass darkly, he's basically describing the fog that all of us are subject to simply by being human. I mean the disciples had to be spoon fed a little bit of truth at a time, and the same is true for us. So Jesus uses an analogy. He says, "*The kingdom is like a treasure buried in a field.*" But this analogy has a cultural problem. I mean, I know every time I used to read this I had a problem with this guy's reaction. I mean something seems vaguely unethical about finding treasure and then kind of sneakily reburying it and then going to buy the field and reclaim it. I mean I thought it was violating this whole idea of full disclosure. And here's where it's helpful to understand a little history and a little Jewish law. John MacArthur points out that what the finder

of the treasure does in this story is not only ethical, he actually goes the extra mile ethically in the story, and here's why. You see in those days in that place there were no such thing as a bank, and there was very little security. I mean if you had anything of value, it was at the mercy of thieves. And so a safe place to hide valuables was in a field obviously in a spot only you and yours knew about. I mean just last week we were talking about the parable of the talents and we looked at the one talent servant who says in *Matthew 25*: "*But he who received the one talent went*" -- what does he do? He went and "*dug in the ground and hid his master's money.*" The ground was the local bank. So it wasn't unusual to find valuables that had been lost or forgotten in a field. I mean someone might have died, someone could have lost track of what they 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 buried treasure. They said as long as you own the field, finders keepers, losers weepers.

Now in this parable though, you have a man who finds a treasure beyond his wildest imagination but he finds it in somebody else's field, and then he reburies it and that's going the extra mile. See, it's only afterwards that he then joyfully sells all that he has in order to buy the field. You see the very act of trying to buy the field would have tipped off the owner if he was using that

field as a bank, and at that point it would have been appropriate for the owner of the field to go dig up his treasure and then sell the field. Well, if he doesn't dig it up, he doesn't know it's there, and the treasure clearly isn't his and it becomes finders keepers, losers weepers. See, a less scrupulous man would not have done anything, and he certainly wouldn't have risked reburying the treasure, I mean, he would have just taken the treasure and bought the field with that money and no one would have been the wiser. But this man didn't. He sold everything that he had to purchase the field and legally own the treasure. But again, here is the key to that transaction, and the key to establishing kingdom motivation. All of this he did joyfully. The point is the treasure was hidden, it was unseen, it was unvalued and the only one who knew the value of that field was the one who discovered the treasure within it. I mean, to everyone else it was just a worthless field. I mean you see what Jesus is getting at here? For three years running he's been telling the disciples about this buried treasure and it's the kingdom of God. And for the most part that treasure's still buried because it's more than they can bear. I mean it was only after the resurrection that they finally began to understand it and then they began to understand it in little bits and pieces. And we're in the exact same boat.

I mean after Jesus' resurrection in Luke 24, he's on the road to

Emmaus, and he's speaking to two distraught disciples who they think for all intents and purposes Jesus is dead and gone. Jesus hears the conversation then remarks how foolish and slow of heart they were and then it says, *beginning with Moses and the prophets, he opened the scriptures to them.* You know what Jesus is doing there? What he was doing is he was showing them previously hidden treasure. The disciples said in *Luke 24: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"* You see Jesus right then and there is showing them treasures that others could not see. And in a very real sense that is our task today. We do what Jesus did. But for perhaps our situation it's even more difficult. We proclaim the same kingdom that Jesus proclaimed but we do it 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, it remains unvalued. I mean I've said many, many times, one of the greatest frustrations in my life is knowing that we have the secret of eternal life, that we have the secret of joy and contentment and wisdom and power not just for now but for eternity, and nobody wants it. I mean it is treasure but it's buried treasure. And how we find it is where Jesus' second parable comes in.

Let me just read this again. This is *Matthew 13.* Jesus says:

"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." That's the first one. Then he follows that up immediately with the second one. He says: "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, both men realize that they've stumbled on hidden treasure, they've both stumbled on something that's value is known by them but not to anyone else. The difference is that one man stumbles on the treasure by accident and he just happens to find it in a field, and the other man though, the other man is seeking it out. Remember, he's a merchant. This is a guy who's knowledgeable, he knows what the treasure is when he sees it, he's just never seen it. But when he does, he too sells everything to get that treasure. You see, sometimes we find the treasure, other times the treasure finds us, but at all times it is God sovereignly guiding the process. Jesus said in *John 6*: "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: "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." You see if I didn't know the truth of Jesus's choosing, I could not go on. I mean I just, I hate the fact that I cannot convince anybody of the value of the treasure in that field. I just don't have the power. But what I do have is

the knowledge of the consequences of unbelief. And I know there's only two types of people in the world, there's the people who have Christ and the people who desperately need Christ. There's no other category. I mean before God everyone is just desperately needy and blind to that fact as well. I mean the road to hell isn't just paved with good intentions, it's paved with the false notion that my goodness somehow is going to be good enough for God. It's not.

Jesus once spoke to the church at Laodicea in *Revelation 3*, and he said this, he said: *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 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 the gold and the white clothes and the salve, all of that is part of the treasure that God has for you and for me, but it's a treasure only to those who recognize that they're spiritually blind, naked and poor. I mean 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 there is for the kingdom of God. It's the one that we repeat every month at communion. As Dane Ortlund 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." You see we have to see ourselves as God sees us. 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.* Well God says all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags. What rags and what's amazing about that statement is God's not singling out all the bad things that we've done, he's singling all the good things, the great things. He's pointing out our very best. He says "*all our righteous deeds,*" the best things we've ever done, those are filthy, polluted rags in his eyes. And we say how can that be? It's because God's standard of goodness is absolute transcendent flawlessness and it's a goodness that makes our very best deeds look filthy and we hate that. And we hate that because we're proud. And that's why God's treasure goes hidden, unseen, and unvalued. It's a treasure that nobody wants because it's a treasure that nobody thinks they need. I mean Jesus lived a perfect life and 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 turn up their nose at it without giving it a second thought, and they do that at their peril. This is what God says in *Hebrews 10*. He says: *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. The RSV translates "insulting the Spirit" as "outraging the Spirit." And they both say that refusing the gospel is tantamount to trampling the Son of God underfoot. It is scorning what God sees as treasure.

I mean when Jesus told the crowds about the kingdom of God, he was addressing only a small fraction of those that he was calling out to and it was those who valued the treasure. In *Matthew 22* Jesus said: *"Many are called but few are chosen."* We have the exact same task as he had, we are in fact doing what Jesus did. We are called on to call to the many but God in that many will call his own. C. H. Spurgeon once said, "If God painted a stripe on his elect, I'd spend my time lifting up shirt tails to see who had the stripe, but he didn't. So I'll just preach the gospel and let God decide." And you know I do that, and I know the results. Most of the folks that I speak to don't see any treasure at all in the gospel. They act threatened or bored or indifferent to its claims. And still there are others who are not looking for a pearl of great price, they're looking for bargain pearls that cost next to nothing. These are not the ones who Jesus was speaking to. You see the man in the field and the merchant seeking pearls, they were

those kind of people. They knew they had treasure worth everything they owned. What kind of treasure was it? It was hidden, it was unseen, it was unvalued. How did they find it? Well the answer is they didn't. It found them. And whether we stumble onto the treasure as I did years ago or diligently seek it out as the merchant did, we value the treasure not out of some inherent wisdom in us, but solely because of the grace of God. Again God says: *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.*

Okay. So here's what we're getting at this morning. We're looking for what motivates kingdom citizens and we've seen that it's finding this previously hidden value of the kingdom. Well, if the treasure is hidden and we don't find it but rather it finds us, how do we know that we found it? Well the answer to that question is actually very simple, and it comes down to those three words that we saw at the beginning of this message. The man in the field *"in his joy sold all that he had and bought the field."* You see you know that you 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. You'll sell everything to get it. But God's kingdom is not a quid pro quo. That's just Latin for a transaction that means "this for that." We don't do

quid pro quos with God. We don't trade with God. It's not my life for your kingdom because the best of my life is still filthy rags, according to God. That's hardly a bargaining chip. I mean its value is below zero and that's our best efforts. The man's joy came from realizing how huge the treasure was, how bankrupt he was and how wonderful it would be to possess that treasure. That perception only happens when God changes your heart from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh that seeks to obey God and follow his rules. 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.

What Christ is describing here is the difference between an internal and external motivation. See, if your motive for coming to the kingdom is external, it's one in which you do good things and in return you expect God to give you a good and easy life, if that's your motivation, then you've been caught up in a transactional form of Christianity that's absolutely not real. Tim Keller points out that the way to determine if you're in this transactional bind is to see how you react when God does something that utterly confounds you. See how you react when God doesn't play by the rules that you were expecting him to play by. He says if your approach is transactional, you're going to be angry, you're going to be upset, you've done your part and, God, you failed to do

yours. This is not to be mistaken for being dumbfounded and mystified when bad things happen. I mean that is to be expected. But a genuine love for God and his kingdom will always seek to *trust in the Lord with all of your heart, lean not on your own understanding* when these tough times come. Transactionism is a form of legalism that seeks to mimic the effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit by reproducing the external signs of his presence. I can tell you Jesus could smell it a mile away. He said in *Matthew 15: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*

So when it comes to sorting out what the motivation is for kingdom citizens, we find ourselves oftentimes stuck between two poles of a false binary choice. There's this transactional form of legalism that tries to bargain with God, trading good Christian living for a safe, healthy and prosperous life, that drives many believers into just a new form of enslavement. But over against that there's another form of deception that the evangelical church has been guilty of promoting for years. Some call it "easy believism," some call it "cheap grace." It's a gospel that changes no one and nothing. You see, the beauty of the gospel is that *"while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."* I mean the requirement for entrance into the kingdom is confessing the Lordship of Christ

while acknowledging my own moral bankruptcy. But unfortunately many in the evangelical church view that as an option to stick with. We take the legitimate notion of coming to Christ "just as I am," and we stretch it to include the idea of "just as I'll always be" because after all, God loves me just as I am. That's a very clever lie that comes from the pit of hell. I love you just the way you are is not the word of God, in fact it's the word of Billy Joel. Somehow or other it's become God's official word. You see, the difference between that reality and God's reality when it comes to the kingdom is that God did love us just the way we were.

Romans 5:8 says: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* This is a love that clearly met us in the past but it never stayed there. God also says in *Philippians 1:6*: *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* See, God is not and never will be content only to love us just the way we are. He will never love us a bit more than when we first came to Christ but the very proof of that love is the presence of the Holy Spirit moving us to -- quote -- "*follow his decrees and be careful to keep his laws.*" That's what motivates kingdom citizens, and we call that attitude "sanctification." It means that Christians will always be about the process of growing more and more like Christ. And if as *Romans 5* says that "*God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has*

given us," then staying just the way I am is a very real sign of the possibility that I've never experienced his love in the first place. You know, as one African-American preacher once brilliantly summed it up, he said: "If you is was you was, you isn't." "If you is what you was, you isn't." If the gospel hasn't changed you then perhaps you've never received it. See, both legalism and cheap grace have one thing in common, their kingdom motivations are from outside, they're external. And whether the culture tells us that your faith should cost you nothing or legalism tells you you must outwardly conform in order to put God in your debt, neither reflects the presence of the Holy Spirit and that's all that really matters. Those are external forces. The priority driving a child of God is always internal. It comes from inside you.

Again let me put this into context. We've seen this morning there are basically three different motivations to becoming a kingdom citizen. Two of them are external and phony and only one of them is real. The transactional legalistic approach motivates me into thinking I'll get something in return for a sanctified life. That's not a treasure, that's a transaction. The deceptive approach motivates me into thinking that the Christian life is simply a nod, an assent to the gospel that costs me nothing. That's a phony treasure worth nothing. The joyful approach is the

one real motivation that Jesus speaks of, and it's a treasure worth everything. *"In his joy he sold all that he had and bought the field."* See, there was no price too high for this man. You have to understand, the standard that Jesus lays out for priorities of kingdom citizens, it is extraordinarily high. Jesus just doesn't suggest that he be first, he absolutely and unequivocally demands it. In *Luke 9: Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* I mean an open, honest assessment of our own life's commitment to Jesus is probably going to find something seriously wrong even with the way we understand his statements or with the way we're living our life. And what we desperately long for is some kind of objective standard that tells us what a Spirit-controlled looks like and we're never going to get that.

So how does God determine who's controlled by the Holy Spirit and who's not? I think you know. The answer is found where your joy is found. If you're a child of God, your primary motivation is the kingdom of God. You love God and his kingdom more than anything else because God has internally placed that love within you via his Holy Spirit. And when the Spirit of God indwells you, you cannot help but love him and his kingdom and you recognize that this motivation is supernatural. Again *Romans 8:9: You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the*

Spirit of God lives in you. And again that doesn't mean that your motivation is perfect. Mercifully God says he's begun a good work in us and he'll bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. And God started the process in you and God will bring it to completion and it's all centered on that word "joy."

Now if you don't sense that same joy that the man discovered in the buried treasure of the kingdom, maybe it's because the Spirit of Christ is not there. And wonderfully there's a solution for that as well. It's *Romans 10:9*: *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* So are you willing to confess Jesus as Lord? Not as co-pilot, not as co-ruler, not as co- anything but as the absolute Lord of your life. You cannot do that without the Holy Spirit's help. As *John 6:3* says: *"The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing."* So ask him today for the grace to make that transition. And if you are a believer, then celebrate. Celebrate with the same joy that motivated the one who found the lost coin or the pearl of great price or the treasure buried in the field. Like I said, that man's joy, his joy came from realizing how huge the treasure was, how bankrupt he was, and how wonderful it would be to possess that treasure. But don't celebrate because you found the greatest thing you will ever encounter, celebrate for joy itself, celebrate instead that it found you. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for the gift of your kingdom. I thank you for the joy that accompanies that knowledge, that understanding. When the Holy Spirit comes into us and indwells us, Lord, he produces a joy and a sense, an overwhelming sense of the value of that kingdom. Lord, give each of us a sense of that profound joy. And to those who have never experienced that joy, Lord, I pray that you would give them the ability to reach out and cry out to you for the presence of your Holy Spirit who will produce that joy, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.