

The True Treasure

Text: Matthew 13:44; Matthew 6:19-24

One of the shortest parables in the Gospels is found in Matthew 13:44. Let's see if we can capture the picture. Allow me to use some imagination. There is a neglected property; it hasn't been sold because several years ago the owner died and left it to no one. Now it is tied up in the proverbial red tape, claimed as city property and the councilmen are asking too much for it, so no one buys it. It was one of those unclaimed pieces of property that is now used as a shortcut by the towns-people. One day a man is in a hurry to get to work and while scampering across the property, he trips over a root, falling face first onto the ground. As he pushes himself up off the earth, his eye catches the glimmer of brass. With his hand he begins to dig, until he sees the unmistakable brass hinge of a treasure chest. He then takes a small hand shovel, digs the treasure chest out of the earth, and pulls up a treasure chest. The man opens the chest to find gold, silver, rubies, sapphires, and pearls. He quickly closes it, buries it back in the earth. And then the Bible says, "...and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." (Matthew 13:44b). One interpretation is that of a beautiful picture of the Gospel, i.e., our Lord sees the price of bringing His people into the Kingdom of Heaven and is willing to give all He has to save His bride. Another interpretation is someone is willing to do what the rich young ruler did not do, "...sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22b). Allow me to tweak that second interpretation: The treasure found in the field is worth so much more than all the treasure he has accumulated, so he thinks nothing of giving all that he has for the hidden treasure.

All that the world has is nothing compared to what we have in Jesus. On this Sunday as we discuss stewardship, it is appropriate to say we are in for great treasure hidden from the people in the world who value material gain, the greatest gain. In making this application we go over to Matthew 6:19-24 where God says to lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus declares, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Our Lord says very plainly that we will either serve God or serve "mammon," which is wealth or money. Paul told Timothy, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). Giving is the best way to be free of material idolatry.

1. ACCEPT THE FACT THAT GOD OWNS EVERYTHING.

Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Psalm 50:10-12: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof."

II Corinthians 4:4 refers to Satan as, "...god of this world..." and in Ephesians 2:2 as, "...the prince of the power of the air..." Revelation 12:9 tells us, "And the great

dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Notice the differentiation between "earth" and "world." The Devil was cast into the earth and his dominion is the world system, restricted to time, which one day will be expired and he will lose his power as its prince. But never does the Lord abdicate ownership to him in any age or in any time.

2. KNOW THAT WE BELONG TO GOD.

Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

I Corinthians 6:19, 20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." We are God's by creation and we are God's by redemption.

3. WE SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP.

Romans 14:10c, "...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." II Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Hebrews 13:17b is a strong reminder to the overseers of the House of God (pastors), "...for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

4. OUR GIVING REFLECTS THE LORDSHIP OF OUR LIVES.

Matthew 6:21: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The Bible says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him..." (I Corinthians 16:2).

There is a promised blessing upon all who give ten percent of their income to God. Malachi 3:10, 11: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts." Proverbs 3:9, 10: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Leviticus 27:30: "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD." Exodus 23:19a: "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God..."

In Hebrew, the word we translate "tithe" means a tenth part. Notice the requirement was to bring, not give. The tithe is not ours and it was never ours. It is the Lord's. When we bring the tithe, we are returning or giving back what belongs to God. Tithing was never limited to the Old Testament. Let's do a brief word study on the word "ought." Compare Matthew 23:23 and Acts 5:29. Tithing is not a matter of generosity. It is a matter of honesty.

“...Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35b). Luke 6:38: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Giving begins after the tithe. And God expects us to step beyond the tithe to giving and that’s where faith promise comes in. II Corinthians 8:1-5 is the most recognized passage defining the concept of faith promise. Basically, it is saying, Lord, as You so provide, I will give by faith to You (II Corinthians 8:12). We also see this exemplified by Christ in II Corinthians 8:9.

5. WHEN WE GIVE, WE ENTER THE LAW OF INCREASING RETURNS.

II Corinthians 9:6-11; Luke 6:38.

Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days”

Proverbs 13:7: “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.”

Matthew 6:19, 20: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

Pastor Pope-