

WELCOME 2 September 2018 – 15 Pentecost '18 B

Matthew 13:44-46

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! *Happy Father's Day!*

It is great to have you here this morning. Please stay with us for morning tea after worship so we can get a chance to know one another better...

Life for us is in many cases binary. Either/or. The lights are on or they're off. The motor is running or it stopped. We're pregnant or we're not. But large parts of our lives are graced by both/and...I am both Father AND son. I am both saint AND sinner.

Today's parables...the hidden treasure & the pearl...Are grace-filled both/and.

Always remember - We are the object of the Father's intense creation-redeeming Son-sacrificing love AND in that rescuing love we are invited to abandon everything else to live with and within that relationship; with the Father the object of our heart's desire & the focus of our devotion through Jesus Christ.

We'll explore and experience that together today...and say with the Psalmist:

*Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth.
My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever. – Ps 73:25-26*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, you look in love on your fallen creation and offer your only Son as our redemption. By the work of your Spirit in us claim all that we are and all that we have in response. Transform our lives so that we are fully devoted to you, worship you alone, and give ourselves completely in service and witness in your name. We pray in the powerful name of Jesus...Amen.

15 PENTECOST '18 B – CONTRAST – PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE & THE PEARL

This is Lamby...It belongs to Charis...since she was born. b/t \$1000 & him: she'd choose him.

- FAITH CHAT:**
1. What is your most treasured possession? Wouldn't trade for all the tea in China
 2. In what things do you place great value?
 3. Was there something of value your father gave/taught/handed down to you?

parable...*παραβολή* = lay 2 things side-by-side compare/contrast – Designed to make us think consider mull over ponder weigh-up...In each of these last 4 weeks...We've looked at a parable from Jesus recorded Mt 13 & in the unfurling of possible meaning settled on 1 key thought...this parable leads us to this conclusion/discovery

Sower - God loves with relentless extravagant abandon. The lavishness of the Sower demonstrates love that says you are precious/cherished by the Father who will never stop sowing his love into your heart...his word into your life...never hold back his desire that you reach the fullness of joy in his presence...never withdraw his Spirit from working to draw you closer to him. In the excessiveness of the Sower is the unyielding hope that from this field so profusely seeded a harvest will come.

Weeds - According to Jesus, you *ARE* his good seed/people of his kingdom/wheat sown into this world. You already are the presence of God's kingdom of grace mixed into the brokenness & evil of this world. Our call here/right is to trust that God will in God's way in God's time bring us to the fullness of his kingdom where all things evil hurtful broken are no more & 'til then we are to be living examples of trust in God's ultimate triumph...living witnesses to the power of mercy & forgiveness & self-giving love because those are stronger truer & more durable than even the worst evil.

Mustard Seed - You & I are planted in a relationship with God & his grace is reigning in us...God reaches out to us to make us his & sows his life/way in us such that we become something greater more life-giving than we ever imagined. God takes little things...seemingly insignificant worthless things...to accomplish great things. He chose us.

Yeast – God loves this world with a love so powerful it reconciles bitter enemies, calms troubled hearts, replaces fear with hope, mourning with joy & drives out death to grant life that never ends...a love so powerful that it heals wounds from deep down & is relentless in its working until all things are made new & whole. A love that knows no boundary & no exhaustion...What God has begun in you in this world in Christ He will bring to fruition. Your Example Always Shines Through.

But today...with the hidden treasure/pearl...What if instead of a single understanding...What if there was a grace-filled “both/and” that unleashes the power of the good news in us in a new way? What do I mean? What would that look like?

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, JOY he hid it again & sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned & bought it!”

Keep in mind...Why does Jesus tell parables? Why does he wrap the good news of God's kingdom/rule of grace in mystery? He's been very clear...so that those who think they've got the inside track to God – for those so self-assured that they won't listen won't see won't be transformed won't be made new will always miss the point. He hides the redeeming power of grace in weakness so that the big/bold/great/grand self-possessed & self-important will look but not see hear but not understand.

BUT those who know their own poverty/brokenness those who know the world is not as it should be who see their own lives & the disasters humankind unleashes against itself...will find in him hope & rescue & re-creation – will receive life/joy/love unmatched and unrelenting...Will in the good news of grace w/o limit...receive life w/o end

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The parable of the Sower is really about the sower...It points to the Father & the nature/character of God...extravagant over-the-top grace...any effort to make it about the soils & end up saying “go be good soil” is destined to fail/miss the point... Grace becomes command & that misses the whole life of Christ...kingdom of grace. So let's begin by seeing this parable as pointing to the Father...hear it like this:

The kingdom of heaven is how the Father acts toward his treasured creation... Those whom he loved & created for himself buried themselves in self-will & autonomy from him. Instead of clinging to him they hid from him until they were lost from themselves...& thought themselves forgotten. But the Father found them hiding & brought them to himself & in His Son Jesus “bought the farm” (died/rose) to have the whole creation back for himself. Christ gave his very life (all that he had) to purchase the whole field (the world), & now has obtained full ownership by right of discovery & redemption. When he comes again, his treasure (his church/people) will be unearthed & fully displayed...like a bride adorned for her husband.

Again...the kingdom of heaven is how the Father relentlessly searches in love for human hearts in even unclean dangerous places...oysters are shellfish & for Jews are unclean/forbidden. But finding those hearts...trapped & lost & alone, unable to free themselves or reveal their own natural beauty...through His Son Jesus Christ gives up everything...to have each pearl/heart for his own. Christ exchanges the glory of heaven & his holy honour to come in lowliness to be dis-honoured so that the Father can take us to himself in fervent love & devotion.

Ezk 34:16 - I will look for those that are lost, bring back those that have strayed away, bandage those that are injured, & strengthen those that are sick.

Php 2:6-8 - Though (Jesus Christ) was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave & was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God & died a criminal's death on a cross.

Heb 12:2-3 - Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

The kingdom of heaven is how the Father acts toward his treasured creation...us. The kingdom of heaven is how the Father relentlessly searches in love for human hearts in every corner of this broken world...will not leave one stone unturned one hard shell uncracked until all are exposed to the brightness & redeeming power of his presence.

Now...if that's true...I bet my life it is...what's the "and" part of the story? I said these parables are a grace-filled "both/and" that unleash the power of the good news in us in a new way...What's the "and"?

You may not have used these exact words... "I'd give my right arm for one of those." Well...maybe not your arm, but every now & then we want something & are willing to go to great lengths to get it...Whatever the cost, whatever the challenge...We know it's something we want. The length to which you are prepared to go is directly proportionate to the value you assign to it & how high it rates on your scale of what matters in life. Hear it like this...

The kingdom of heaven is like you & me...stumbling through this life just trying to live through another sunrise...keep our job pay the bills find a new place to live raise our kids stay alive & staring us right in the face is Jesus saying, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." – Heb 13:5...right in the thick of our sleepless nights Jesus says: "Come to me, all you that are weary & are carrying heavy burdens, & I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, & learn from me; for I am gentle & humble in heart, & you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, & my burden is light." - Mt 11:28-30 When we think we have reached the end of our rope & dry bottom of our well of hope...

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to the weak & strength to the powerless." – Is 40:28-29

Every single one of us is looking for something to make life complete...to patch a hole fill a void...heal a wound. And Jesus says that very thing is right before our eyes in him & his love for us...His Spirit unleashed in us. The very place where our hurts are healed our tears blessed & joy poured out like wine at a wedding are in his presence on the resurrection side of his crucifixion because it is that death & rez that guarantee life to the full for all who believe – it is that death & rez forgive sin & restore broken lives to wholeness & bring us into the Father's arms forever.

The kingdom is the joy when we quit trying to make it on our own quit trying to prove ourselves masterful & competent & run headlong into the joy of that love & grace... The kingdom is that moment when we ignore the stares & rebuke of the crowd & just let the glory & the power of that eternal gift take over every square centimeter of our lives...when we are not afraid to pack it all in & bet all we are & all we have on living out that grace that has claimed us for the Father...when there is no question that we have fully abandoned ourselves to the life of love & grace in Christ...when the world thinks we've gone stupid because...

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, JOY he hid it again & sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned & bought it!"

That is the Father's love toward you & the gift of His Son to make you his precious beloved treasured child...AND it is his invitation for your life in response.

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father God, whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but You Father, you Lord Jesus, you Holy Spirit; are the strength of my heart and my portion forever. I pray in your Name...Amen.**