

Matthew 13:44-46; Deuteronomy 7:6-9

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Hope Lutheran Church and School

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In the name of Jesus. Amen.

God has graced us this Lord's Day to have already heard three parables of Christ, two of which we will ponder the depths of, namely, the Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Parable of the Pearl of Great Value. Throughout the many centuries of the Church's preaching and teaching of these two parables, two different interpretations or meanings have preachers, teachers, and Christians given of these two parables. We will call these two camps of Christians friendly camps, because, despite their different understandings of these parables, they don't fight each other about it. Neither one has used its interpretation to malign the other or to even get into any SERIOUS debate about it. BOTH agree, and I think it is safe to say that we all agree, that these two parables are two versions of the same reality which Christ is bringing to us.

But one camp of teachers over the centuries, if you will, says that the man and merchant are the surprised sinner, or the Christian, who discovers the kingdom of God in Christ proclaimed in the Gospel of Christ, for which upon hearing it, the glad sinner gives up everything to follow Christ Jesus, or the glad disciple of Jesus gives up everything to follow Christ, the treasure and costly pearl are Christ and His soul-saving Gospel. This interpretation has been the prevailing, almost unanimous interpretation for most of the history of the Christian preachers and teachers preaching and teaching up until the eighteenth century. Wow, that's a long time and a lot of preachers and teachers!

The other camp of teachers who arose in the eighteenth century so as to finally create two camps says that the man and merchant are Christ Jesus and the treasure and pearl are the

whole world of sinners, including the followers of Jesus, and the “selling all that he has” and the “buying of the field and the costly pearl” are Christ Jesus giving up the glory of heaven and giving Himself up to the death on the cross here in this world to redeem sinners back to Himself.

Thankfully, Christians and teachers who find themselves in either camp of understanding these parables don’t fight each other about it. In fact, we can see both of these understandings in many of the hymns we sing.

We can see in Scripture many places which would lead us to say that Christ is the priceless treasure and that we are called as His people to forsake all for the surpassing glory of knowing Him. Although this is not an exhaustive list, some of those passages of Scripture are the following:

From Mark, chapter 8:

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Hence, we sing, “Jesus, Priceless Treasure,” and “What Is the World to Me” and other hymns to express the same thing.

From Matthew, chapter 19, but more pointedly and to the point for all Christians are the words of Jesus in Mark, chapter 10:

²⁹ Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Hence, we sing, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” and other hymns to express the same thing.

The list continues ...

In Philippians, chapter 3, the apostle Paul puts forward his experience and practice as an example for us to follow, saying,

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Hence, we sing, “‘Come, Follow Me,’ the Savior Spake” and “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus” among others that express the same thing.

And in Hebrews, chapter 10,

³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened [with the Gospel], you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

This list of such passages that speak of our call to forsake all that would take us from Christ and to cling to Christ the priceless treasure goes on and on and on for a very long list.

But, and more importantly, we can see in Scripture many places which would lead us to say that those two parables are speaking of US being the treasure and that Christ Jesus is the One who sought us out and gave up everything and all glory and suffered all in order to purchase and win us from all sin, from the world, from the devil and from death, and that by His innocent sufferings and death and His precious blood. Although this is not an exhaustive list, some of those passages of Scripture are the following:

From Matthew, chapter 20, Jesus says of Himself in regard to rescuing us,

“...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (v. 28).

All of Isaiah, chapter 53, but of special mention are the following verses:

Surely [Christ] has borne our griefs

and carried our sorrows;

yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;

he was crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,

and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned—every one—to his own way;

and the LORD has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.

⁸ ... he was cut off out of the land of the living,

stricken for the transgression of my people?

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;

by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,

make many to be accounted righteous,

and he shall bear their iniquities.

2 Corinthians, chapter 8,

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich [that is, rich in God].

From Galatians, chapter 3,

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

From 1 Corinthians, chapter 6,

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price.

Several versus from 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, speak of Christ seeking us, and with His flesh and blood redeeming us back to Him by making the great exchange of Himself for us. Those versus say,

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised [from the dead].

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself ¹⁹ ... in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their

trespasses against them ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And from 1 John, chapter 2,

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² [Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

All of Psalm 22, which we all can read later today, and the apostle Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost, in Acts, chapter 2, and all of the four Gospels' testimonies of the sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus for the redemption of us sinners, and today's epistle reading from Romans, chapter 8, and the list goes on and on and on for at least another four hours of recitations.

Hence, we sing, "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" and "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me,"

Not the labors of my hands, can fulfill Thy Law's demands; Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; Thou [Lord Jesus] must save, and Thou alone." and scores of other hymns we sing to express that Christ Jesus was the one who sought us out and who purchased us to make us His own.

And passages of Scripture that in the same paragraphs say both understandings of these beautiful parables, there are the following ...

In Philippians, chapter 3, the apostle Paul moreover says,

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but **I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me HIS own.** ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

And all of the first epistle of the apostle John, among others, of course.

But you know, after hearing of all that Christ Jesus has given and done to ransom us to Himself, what Scripture says of how we cling to Him in response to His redemption of us is // well, / underwhelming. Nothing of what we suffer the loss of or whatever we give contributes anything to our justification before God or of our redemption to Him. We are over-whelmed by the price that Christ has paid for us. In fact, as to whatever we suffer the loss of in order to know Christ and to cling to Him who has a firm grip of His grace on us, what do we have that God has not given us? All of it is His anyway. And so we sing, “We give Thee but Thine own [O God], whatever the gift may be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.” And how could we poor, miserable sinners render any thanks or service to Him, and how could we powerless sinners cling to Him, and how could we who were by nature His enemies opposed to Him become His beloved children, if He did not first seek us out, and give up all, and impart

into our darkened hearts God, the Holy Spirit, to convert us into God's children? He has done it all!

Nothing else and nothing of us has purchased us from sin and death except the perfect life, the innocent sufferings, the outpoured blood and death and resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. That is the price, and He alone is the One, that have bought us from sin and death and made us righteous before God and made us citizens of His kingdom forever. Rejoice, redeemed saints, for He has made you His beloved treasure in Christ Jesus. Amen.