

Sermon Matthew 13 44 52 6th S af Pent 2011

Sermon: 6th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 13:44-52: The parable of the hidden treasure and...

Theme: Do you want a treasure?

Goal: To show that nothing is more value and permanent than the kingdom of God.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: One of the biggest copper mine in Zambia was discovered by a hunter in 1922. When he realized that there was copper in the rocks in the area where he was hunting, he made all efforts to buy that land, to have the rights to exploit minerals from it, and to remove any traditional owner of that property. It took a lot of time and bureaucracy, and he invested whatever he had to buy that piece of land. Only after he had all the guarantees, he began to exploit the copper mine. And he was not disappointed after all his efforts: the mine gave him great richness!

Jesus tells a parable with a similar background to demonstrate the huge value of the Kingdom of heaven. But there is a big difference about how to get it: On the one hand, we have to give up whatever we have to obtain that treasure; but on the other hand, we cannot pay anything for it. There is no money or efforts enough to buy it. It's free! Let's understand God's way to manage this.

I – The treasure

“The kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field... and like a pearl of great value.” *The Kingdom of heaven is portrayed as something beautiful, valuable and infinitely more enriching than anything else. It is worthy to sacrificing all for the sake of the kingdom (ABC 1139).* Jesus spoke several times about money and richness to illustrate the kingdom of heaven.

In Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus warns: “Do not store up for yourselves

treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” All of us know how unstable and fragile are our goods, properties and money. We need them, we work for them, it's not wrong to have them (we recognize them as a blessing of God); but robbery, inflation, fire, or money market crash can take away in one minute what we have saved for years! And we know that nothing will go with us in our last hour. - Where is your heart? “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col 3:2), says Paul to the Colossians.

How shall a Christian manage his life and business? Paul says to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:29-32): “What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on... those who buy something... should live... as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. I would like you to be free from concern.”

Paul speaks about the real richness when he wrote to the Colossians 2: 2-3: “My goal is that you may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that you may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that you may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

God has in His treasures richness that money cannot buy: His love, the forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice, peace of mind as we are forgiven, hope, faith... This is the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great value in Jesus' parable. We can not buy it; but God offers all free, by His grace. By faith we accept everything as a free gift and enjoy God's blessings as His children and heirs. Nothing can be compared to God's richness. But if we don't believe, we don't have anything. Maybe an unbeliever has lots of earthly riches, but they will not help him in his last hour, as Jesus spoke in the parable of the fool rich man: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’” Then he said, “This

is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

We can never lose the final goal of our life and of our faith.

II – To give up whatever you have for the sake of the Kingdom

I was talking about the Apostle Paul some Sundays ago. He was a learned person, educated in good schools and came from a traditional and well situated family. He had a good position in the society and a brilliant career in front of him. But when Jesus met him, he considered everything he had as rubbish. Jesus was now all in all for him, his most precious treasure! He wrote to the Philippians 3:7-9: "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him."

Paul did exactly what the two men in Jesus' parables did: He gave up all whatever he had in order to gain Jesus. Only one thing was now important to him: Jesus. But it is important to notice that he used his skills, his influence, his family relationship, his knowledge, his rights as a Jewish citizen and at the same time as a Roman citizen (he had double citizenship) to serve Christ in his ministry. He put everything he had under his call to be a Christian and a missionary. Christ was always in first place in his life.

Psalm 19:9-10 says: "The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold."

Conclusion: There is a tale from the ancient Greeks about King Midas. I think you know it; but it's good to remember it in connection with Jesus' teaching in our text. What has more value in our life?...

“The story of King Midas is a myth about the tragedy of avarice and narrates what happens when true happiness is not recognized. Midas was a man who wished that everything he touched would turn into gold. However, he had not realized that this wish was not actually a blessing, but a curse. He asked Dionysus, one of his gods: “I wish that everything I touch becomes gold”. Dionysus promised the king that from that following day everything he touched would turn into gold.

The next day, Midas, woke up eager to see if his wish would come true. He extended his arm touching a small table that immediately turned into gold. Midas jumped with happiness! He then touched a chair, the carpet, the door, his bathtub, a table and so he kept on running in his madness all over his palace until he got exhausted and happy at the same time! He was sitting at the table to have breakfast and took a rose into his hands to smell its fragrance. When he touched it, the rose became gold. Without even thinking, he ate a grape but it also turned into gold! The same happened with a slice of bread and a glass of water. Suddenly, he started to sense fear. Tears filled his eyes and that moment, his beloved daughter entered the room. When Midas hugged her, she turned into a golden statue! Despaired and fearful, he raised his arms and prayed to Dionysus to take this curse from him. The god heard Midas and felt sorry for him. He told Midas to go to the river and wash his hands. Midas did so: he ran to the river and was astonished to see gold flowing from his hands. When he returned home, everything Midas had touched earlier had become normal again. Midas hugged his daughter in full happiness and decided to share his great fortune with his people. From now on, Midas became a better person, generous and grateful for all the good things of his life. (From the internet).

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33). Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle - Cape Town, 24 July 2011

