

Kingdom Stories
Week 4: Hidden Treasure & Pearls

You may think that the idea of a **kingdom is fanciful and pretend**. It's a romanticized version of bygone days when kings and queens were **noble in character, wise, benevolent, and good looking**. In the Old Testament, God **warned** the Israelites when they wanted a king that **they wouldn't like it**. They **chose a different** kind of kingdom. Be careful what you wish for. And it happened exactly as God said it would. **There were more evil, corrupt, kings** than there were good ones who kept the people following the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The problem is, they had the wrong king with the wrong kind of kingdom. Those were based upon **power in the hands of flawed people**. The Kingdom of God, or Heaven, is different. **It is based upon power and love in the right hands.**

You may have grown up and never heard these parables or kingdom stories. In that case, you might have a **bias against this type of language** because you were born in the west, in America, where we are a part of a **democratic republic** based upon individuality. **The idea of a king is an antiquated idea, because we are better being our own kings of our own little lives or kingdoms.** How's that working for you? I would challenge you to **have an open mind**. Look at what God's word says about it. **Here are two phrases** we are using to frame what Jesus is teaching us about the kingdom through these stories or parables.

The Kingdom of God is a present reality and a future hope.

In most churches, the kingdom of God would have been boiled down to only a future help. The problem with this, is that it isn't what the Bible teaches. And the effect of this is that we view what happens in this world as nothing more than getting off of a sinking ship. The kingdom of God means only avoiding hell and getting to heaven.

That brings us to the here and now. **The Kingdom is the restoration of God's rule and reign here on earth.**

This is the restoration of God's rule and reign over all things. "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." That means people's hearts, nature, relationships... There are all of these subversive signs of this restoration happening all around us in anticipation of Jesus returning and everything is put right.

This is the verse that ties all of these Kingdom stories together. ¹⁰ **His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the**

people?" ¹¹ He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. ¹² **To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.** ¹³ That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand. ¹⁴ This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says, 'When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. ¹⁵ For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.' ¹⁶ **"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.** ¹⁷ **I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but they didn't see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn't hear it.** Matthew 13:10-17

Today we are reading two brief Kingdom stories that are packaged together. **Don't let the size fool you.** The **point of the spear** is small in diameter, but it can get to the heart quickly. ⁴⁴ "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. ⁴⁶ When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it! Matthew 13:44-45

Earlier, in Matthew 13, Jesus teaches the crowds using parables and kingdom stories. Then he moves **away from the crowd into a house** where he explains some of what he taught to the disciples. While he's in the house, he teaches his followers for the first time in a parable. Therefore, **he is not using it to test the hearts** or to conceal anything, but rather to reveal something to those who have come closer.

Jesus teaches two similar stories about the kingdom, but each is for a different type of person. **The difference is in how they find the kingdom.** They are very different and one is not better than the other. **The thing is, that they have both found something of surpassing value. Which one are you?**

Here's how I would describe the first type of person...**He stumbles upon it without even looking for it...**

Let's look at verse 44 again. ⁴⁴ "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again

and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.
Matthew 13:44

It was not uncommon for a homeowner to bury their valuables in a field when invaders were coming so that they could dig them up later. In the case where this person is killed, the treasure has been forgotten. The land might change hands several times before the treasure is uncovered.

So there is some guy walking through a deserted field looking at the sky, listening to the birds, when thud. He stubs his toe on what he believes is a rock. He falls to the ground, cursing the rock and gravity. Close toed shoes were not big back then. As he is rubbing his foot, he notices that it's not a rock, but the edge of some sort of a wooden box or chest. He frantically digs with his hands around the box and pulls it up out of the hole. As he pries open the lid, he sees that it is filled with gold and silver coins. More money than he would make in a lifetime. Seeing that it is too big and too conspicuous to drag it out of this field and all the way home, he decides to put it back in the hole and bury it. He marks the spot and goes home. He sells everything he has, takes the money, and buys the field. Now the treasure is his.

The blind squirrel finding the nut.
And every dog has his day.

But if it is God and he is sovereign, was this stumbling upon a treasure really as random as it seems...or was the Holy Spirit drawing you.

⁴⁴ For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. ⁴⁵ As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. John 6:44-45

Is this your story? You weren't even looking for Jesus, and you found him. You were just stumbling through your life with no plan and yet, somehow, the Holy Spirit put you in the right place at the right time. You heard something, saw something, dreamed something, or thought something, turned around and it was what you needed, even though you weren't actively looking for it.

Finding \$50.00 in the men's room at Burger King on High Street in Columbus, Ohio.

One kind of person who finds the kingdom of God this way...He stumbles upon it without even looking for it...**Once it is discovered, its great value is recognized.**

...worth more than all his possessions...it is far more valuable than the field itself. Worth sacrificing for it

"No sacrifice is too great to live in God's will and experience a discipleship relationship with Jesus as Master." 488 **Or do you just believe it's about heaven?**

The second question is, are you going to respect what you have been allowed to find, or will you take it for granted?

You had much joy at coming to Christ, but then you **began to have expectations about how this thing of great worth was going to help you succeed or even avoid the bad things that happen to other people.**

For me that \$50.00 was a lot of money. What was I going to do with it? I bought several MD shamrocks and then bought Robin some fancy perfume that I knew she would like.

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. 1 Peter 1:18

The kingdom of God increases in value because by paying a ransom for you, he then adopted you as an heir to his kingdom. You don't become a serf in his kingdom. You serve him as one who communes with the king, joins his work in this world, and gets a mansion in the next. Along with a new resurrection body that no longer feels pain or experiencing any suffering because there is no more sin to cause it.

The next kingdom story describes a different kind of person who sees the Kingdom of God...The Pearl ⁴⁵ **"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. ⁴⁶ When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it! Matthew 13:45-46**

The second kind of person who finds the kingdom of God in a totally different way... **Knowing what it is and looking for it diligently...** Instead of stumbling upon something that one recognizes as having surpassing value, this is, **"a diligent search by one well qualified to know its value will ultimately lead to the kingdom."** 488

The merchant knows quality when he sees it. He has some aspects of a choice pearl. **That doesn't mean that he has seen one with all of the aspects of a choice pearl in one package.**

You may not know this about me, but I'm a bit of a pearl expert. Along with math and science, I also study pearls. And here's what I've learned after searching the internet.

The luster of good quality pearls is sharp and bright. You should be able to see your reflection clearly on the surface of a pearl. Any pearl that appears **too white, dull, or chalky**, is of low quality.

Pearl Surface...The cleaner the surface of the pearl, the more valuable it is. Look for an **absence of disfiguring spots, bumps, or cracks** on the surface of a pearl, also known as "cleanliness." Notice that the highest quality pearls have a **sharp, mirror-like reflection**.

Pearl Shape...**A perfectly round pearl is very rare.** The rounder the pearl, the more valuable it is. Baroque pearls are not symmetrical in shape, and can be lustrous and appealing, but will typically cost less than round pearls.

Pearl Color...**Pearls come in a variety of colors**, from white to black and every shade in between. It is important to distinguish between color and overtone. For example, some naturally occurring colors are white, champagne, aqua, green, golden, and black. Within each color category, there are a number of common overtones, or subtle variations in the surface iridescence. Choosing your preferred overtone is a matter of taste, although rosé overtones tend to look best on fair skin, while cream and gold-toned pearls are most flattering to those with darker complexions.

Pearl Size...**When all other value attributes are identical, the value of a pearl is determined by its size.** The larger the pearl, the more valuable. Pearls are measured by their diameter in millimeters. Tiny seed pearls can be smaller than a single millimeter, while South Sea pearls as large as 20 mm have been found. If all other quality factors are equal, the size of a pearl will determine its value. **Only a 1 millimeter increase in pearl size** is a substantial jump in both appearance and value. The average pearl sold today is between 6.5 mm and 7.0 mm.

This guy found a pearl that had luster, you could see your reflection in it, there were no bumps or blemishes, it was perfectly round, his favorite color, white with rose overtones, and finally was the size of a tennis ball. **It was the total package!**

First of all, do you know what you are looking for?

- Are you just trying to avoid hell?
- Are you willing to try something that might help you with your kids?
Church is good for helping kids stay out of trouble.

- Are you looking for things that you can do that will earn you good standing in God's eyes?

You may be looking for the kingdom, but your picture of what you are searching for is flawed. Yes, the answer to all of the questions is partially yes, but they all miss the point.

When you find the kingdom, it means you are an ambassador for the King, making the kingdom present for others who had just been stumbling into your life or possibly looking for something more than what the culture offers.

This is a part of being an ambassador for Jesus' Kingdom. ⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. Luke 10:4-6 ESV

Can you recognize the person of peace?

Can you see God moving and restoring?

Zack

Cassie

Ty

The young lives moms who are joining Altha in bible study

Deb and Dave

Tammy Scully

Or, are you too busy focusing on the world going to hell in a handbasket?

Are you looking in the right place for that abundant life in the kingdom?

Some people find the kingdom by...Knowing what it is and looking for it diligently...once it is found there is confirmation that it is better than expected.

Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! Psalm 34:8 You can't just smell the meal, you have to taste it. Taste means you are trusting the cook. Smelling doesn't demand any trust. Looking at it on the plate doesn't take any trust. Grabbing a fork, stabbing a piece, and shoving it in your mouth takes trust. But that is the only way you will ever know just how good it is.

The abundant life in the kingdom can only be accessed by hearing God's voice and then obeying. It is asking, "What are you up to today that I can join?"

Created in Christ Jesus for good works that he has prepared beforehand.
Responding to Jesus' Kingdom Story.

A time of confession & praise.

- Does my budget and calendar demonstrate that I value Jesus above all?
- Have I allowed anxiety or fear to cause me to miss his kingdom happening now?

What must real confession and praise be followed by? Repentance.

An act of repentance

I believe that we are moving into one of the greatest times that the church has ever seen. God saw fit to make you the church for this time in history.

Whether you stumbled upon him or searched for him, what is necessary for us to be a blessing to the people around us, is that we value Jesus and his kingdom above all. **Jesus must be our treasure, our pearl of great price, if we are to make his kingdom present for people around us who are lost and don't know what they need.**