



9th Sunday of Pentecost

30th July 2023

Baptism of Seth Reinecke

Main Point:

God's gift of membership in his kingdom is a treasure that's worth giving up everything else to possess. His gift of a relationship with our Heavenly Father, and the person of the Holy Spirit in our heart is a treasure that we can bring out of our storerooms over and over again to apply to each new situation we find ourselves.

A treasure worth giving our all to receive.

It can be really interesting to observe what people will give their all, to get.

Maybe they give all their time, all their effort, all their food choices - to receive a gold medal. Or maybe they train for a marathon so they can finally say, 'I've done it' – so receive the prize of achievement. Or maybe they work from early morning until late at night, to grow a business, to climb the corporate ladder – to receive the pleasures and prestige of a successful lifestyle. Or maybe they'll endure some profound difficulty, like participating in a game like *Survivor*, or *The Great Race*, in the hope of receiving the \$1 million prize. It has often been said, 'people will do almost anything for money.'

When we read the two stories told by Jesus, we are left asking ourselves, 'For what would I give my all?'

Let's imagine you're at a dinner party. Everyone is telling stories about interesting things that have happened in their lives.

Fred, the man on your left, says,

"You know, when I was a young lad, I was a labourer, given the job of ploughing a field to prepare it for harvest.

One day while I was ploughing away, my shovel hit something hard beneath the surface. I dug further and found the most amazing discovery, a huge sack of gold. I couldn't believe my good fortune!

I sat back on my knees and thought, 'what will I do?'

There was no one around. But I knew I couldn't just take it. That wouldn't be right because the field didn't belong to me. And besides that, the sack was too heavy for me to lift and fit into my bag. But I tell you, I'll never forget the joy that pulsed through my body, at the thought of what I had found.

Almost immediately, I knew what I needed to do. I covered up the treasure. Went home and sold absolutely everything I owned: my home, my car, my clothes, all my possessions. Only then did I have enough to buy the field. As soon as the title deed was signed, boy did we have a party! I invited everyone I knew to celebrate my new life."

Then, just as Fred had finished, Justin, the man on your right, began,

"That is just so amazing, because I too have a similar story. When I was young, I was salesman, a trader in precious pearls. I went in search of pearls, wherever they could be found. One day, while searching in the south seas, I came across a dealer who had discovered the most superb pearl I had ever seen. It was huge, its sheen, almost translucent. I realised this pearl alone would set me up for life. A pulsating thrill went through my body at the joy of what having found this pearl meant. But, to buy this pearl, I too had to sell absolutely everything I owned so I could afford it."

You're astounded! How amazing that two people could have such similar stories. As you drove home that evening, what they said really got you thinking.

What stood out was the profound joy they had both experienced. As they retold their story, the joy seemed to beam from their face. It wasn't just a momentary thrill of having discovered something pretty great, the joy was still evident in their lives.

Do you own something that can be considered priceless, something that makes everything else fade into insignificance? Do you possess something that brings such joy to your life, that you walk around day-after-day glowing with the knowledge that what you have can never be taken away from you?

I'm sure that Jesus glowed with joy as he told these stories. I wonder if his listeners were wondering, 'what does the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price represent?'

Jesus said, he was describing the Kingdom of Heaven. That kind of helps us. It means that Jesus was talking about something 'out of this world', something that is hidden from most, something you can't see with your physical eyes.

The Apostle Paul spent a lot of time talking about this treasure in his letters. For example, when he wrote to the believers at Corinth, or modern day Greece, he said,

"For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

You see, the treasure of the Kingdom of heaven is tied to Jesus himself. With a knowledge of Jesus comes a knowledge of God, and with a knowledge of God comes a relationship with our heavenly father that was previously unattainable and inaccessible for us.

But wait there is more! Not only has the way been made open for us to come into relationship with our Heavenly Father through His Son Jesus, the Apostle Paul also described the 'treasure' that Jesus spoke about as something very much 'out of this world'.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay [meaning our physical bodies] to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7)

The great treasure of the Kingdom of heaven is not only the forgiveness and right-standing with our heavenly Father that is only available to those who put their faith and trust in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

It is also the gift of something that the world cannot receive – the precious person of the Holy Spirit who comes and lives inside our heart.

Now in listening to Fred and Justin's stories, although they had to purchase their treasures, the treasure that Jesus and Paul are talking about is a free gift.

But there is something that we need to give in order to receive Jesus precious gift.

When Jesus called people to follow him, it meant they had to give up everything they had – for him. We need to be prepared to give up our very lives, our will, our agenda, our political views, our loves – our all.

We see this vividly in the lives of the first disciples. They left everything to follow Jesus.

In fact, Jesus said, "... those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples." (Luke 14:33)

So, what does that mean for us, today?

It means opening our grip on what we hold most dear – and offering to the Lord Jesus, with a heart that says 'Lord, if you need me to give this up to follow you I will.'

What we learnt today is that it is only when we treasure the free gift offered by our heavenly Father, and hold it in such high value, that we are able to open our grip and offer our lives to Jesus. Once you've found what is most valuable to you, everything else becomes secondary.

All our human wants and desires suddenly come into perspective. We're called to give up what is most valuable to us, to make room for the most valuable possession there is – a relationship with our heavenly Father, through his Son Jesus Christ.

That's how precious this great treasure of the Kingdom of heaven is. It's a free gift, but at the same time it calls us to give our all, to receive it.

Let us be like Paul and say:

"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ." (Philippians 3:8-9)