

ViralStJames Bible Study #12: Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

The Background: Finding what you are looking for

Matthew 13:44-46

Jesus told parables to shock or jolt his listeners into thinking outside of their normal box. As far as many of his hearers were concerned, they were God's chosen race. Their identity lay in their descentance from Abraham and was demonstrated through obedience to the Law and sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem, the place where heaven and earth met. Simple! So no need to do any challenging thinking about the life of the world to come then.....

Jesus challenges this complacency. His stories shocked then as they do now. In these parables he forces his listeners to think - where is the real treasure of life to be found? Is it always as visible as some might think? How costly is it to find, and when you do find it, how does it change you?

The Passage

Matt. 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matt. 13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The Questions

1. What is the most precious thing in your life?
2. In what way do you think God's Kingdom is like buried treasure?
3. Read Proverbs 2:1-9. Jesus would have been familiar with this passage. What is the hidden treasure here and what benefits does it bring?
4. Read Colossians 2:1-3. Where does Paul say the buried treasure is to be found? What benefits does he identify?
5. In both Proverbs and in the Parable, the treasure has to be searched for and found. How do we search for it?
6. What is the cost involved to both the man finding the treasure and the merchant buying the pearl? Now read Philippians 3:7-11. What value does Paul put on new life in Christ? Are these Parables and Paul's words a challenge to the value we put on new life in Christ?
7. The merchant sold everything he had to buy the pearl of great value that he found. He was therefore no longer a merchant, but a man with a new identity – a man who had a pearl of great value. Where do we derive our identity? Read 1 Corinthians 3:16. Perhaps the pearl, the new identity, is God's Spirit within us?
8. Now we have the found the pearl, discovered the buried treasure, found a new identity – is that it? Do we simply put our feet up and relax? What does Paul say in the continuation of the passage in Philippians 3:12-16?
9. Why does Paul say it is important to 'live up to what we have already attained' (Philippians 3:16)? What does it mean in practice? How visible to others is this new life in Christ? What use are treasures unless they are spent?
10. What do you take away from this reflection?