

## Parable of the Hidden Treasure

### TALK

Who when growing up wanted to find a treasure map, and go looking for buried treasure? I would love to have been a pirate. We like discovering things, even if its checking down the back of the sofa and finding a few coins.

I have two short stories today, one ancient and one modern, of men at work, who unexpectedly discover a treasure. [One of them is Lewis]

### Finding treasure in a field

The first is in biblical times when it was quite common for people to bury their valuables to protect them from thieves, or invaders from other countries. It wasn't uncommon for a grandfather say to die before he'd past on the whereabouts of his buried fortune. So treasure stayed purposefully hidden beneath a field.

Also worth noting, is that the law at the time of Jesus said that if you owned something, anything inside it was yours. So if I bought a bowl of olives and found a gold wedding ring in it, then that ring would now legally belong to me, and no longer to the poor old fruit-picker who had lost it that morning

Jesus tells this story of a young man who needing work, rents a field, becomes a tenant farmer, and is digging over his plot. He was not looking for treasure, but unexpectedly discovers it hidden under the field. Treasure that some-one has purposefully placed there, perhaps a long time ago. It was an exciting discovery. He dug it up and was amazed. He had never ever seen anything as beautiful and valuable before, and he set his heart on having it. However by law the treasure belonged to the person who owned the field. So he hid it back under the soil. He would do whatever it took to make this treasure his. He wasn't a wealthy man, so he ended up having to sell everything he had to buy the field. It was a quite a long process in those days. But it's a story with a happy ending. The day finally arrived, when he had completed the purchase. What a wonderful day, finally the field, **and** more importantly the treasure were both his.

### Why did Jesus tell the story?

But why did Jesus tell this story about buried treasure? All Jewish Rabbis like Jesus had disciples, who followed them around everyone and he taught them about God. They had their scriptures, their version of the bibles old testament, and they knew the words very well, but they wanted to know how do you really apply this stuff? How should they serve and worship God, and how can God make a real difference in their lives and their relationships? What Jesus is saying through this parable, is that it is not enough to just look at what the words say on the surface, but they should dig deeper into the words, meditate on them, debate them, ask questions, and uncover some hidden truths. Why – because there are some real gems in there to be discovered that have purposefully been placed there, below the surface, which will make a real difference to their lives, and it is worth making real sacrifices in both time and effort to find them, and apply them.

### The three principles

There are three principles for us today that we can pick out of this passage..

The first is that we may miss out if we just look at things on the surface (and are quick to make a judgement), and don't put the effort in to dig a bit deeper

The second is that God hides things **for** us, and not **from** us.

Finally, there are some things in life that are worth giving up a whole lot for

### Treasure in the Bible

So Jesus was talking about the scriptures. We too have our Bibles.

When you look at the Bible, on the surface it might not look very inspiring. You might think, well it just contains a list of 'shalls' and 'shall nots' – love your neighbour, don't lie, don't steal etc..

But that's just the surface, at it's very core the bible is about a relationship with God, with Jesus.

It's full of treasures. When we dig deep into this book we can discover some real gems, including that he loves you for who you are, and wants to be close to you

### **Treasure in the Church**

When you look at a **Church**, on the surface it too might not look very inspiring. A nice enough building perhaps like this one, it can have a nice tower, stained glass, chiming bells, and perhaps a beautiful décor. But that's just the surface.

As kids we interlocked our fists and then raised the forefingers to meet, saying Here's the church, and here's the steeple. Then turned it upside and wiggled our fingers. Look inside and there's the people. That's the real church. But even then on the surface, you might think it's just about people singing hymns, listening to a sermon, saying a prayer and putting money in a plate, then going home for their Sunday roast.

But again that's just the surface, at it's very core the Church is about a relationship with God, with Jesus, and with each other.

Then if you dig deeper, you will find some real gems in the Church, working out their faith, they demonstrate a love for their community and the wider world. Running food banks, raising aid for refugees, and a real diversity of other charity work, loving people in the name of Jesus. He loves that stuff.

In fact Jesus loves his Church so much that we read in the bible that he called it his bride, the bride of Christ. Wow! A real intimate love for his Church, to call it his Bride.

.. which brings us nicely to second story of discovery and why we are here today.

### **Finding treasure in a shop**

The second story one of modern times. Another young man who needs work, does not rent a field, but gets a job with Blacks outdoor retailers in Gloucester. He was not looking for treasure, but unexpectedly discovers it, in the form of a part-time assistant Tammy. Perhaps purposefully placed there for him by God. It was an exciting discovery. He had never ever seen anything as beautiful and valuable before, and he set his heart on her. First off, he was determined that she would invite him back to her house for coffee. Then he would do whatever it took to make this treasure his. He wasn't a wealthy man, but she would be worth giving everything up for, in order to win her over as his wife. It was quite a long process. But it's a story with a happy ending. Today we celebrate with Lewis and Tammy, that right here right now that desire is coming true for Lewis. The treasure is finally his. It was worth all the effort and some!

### **Treasure in a Marriage**

Looking at the surface, some people say 'Marriage is an institution', or it's just a piece of paper. That's not true. Marriage is about a relationship, a very special one, one in which it is right to go deeper, and not just at surface level, to take time and put the effort in, to see what hidden gems are within each other, and bring out the very best in each other.

I used to watch a programme called Mr & Mrs (remember that?), which quizzed married couples on how much they knew about each other. Young couples normally bombed out. Then on would come an old couple, who had been together 30 years or more and they would ace it. During their long time together, they had made the effort to go deeper into their relationship, and really spend time getting to know how the other one thought and felt. They had discovered some of the treasure of the inner person that they had married.

What's on the surface may look great. Tammy and Lewis look top notch today, but their real treasure is deeper within, and has been purposefully placed there by God. It is for each other to put the effort in to bring that treasure to the surface, by working at their relationship, giving up other things if necessary.

### **What does Jesus add?**

The Jesus you find at the centre of the bible, and the centre of the church, also wants to be at the centre of your marriage, in fact central to all our relationships. But the question has to be – why bother? What can Jesus bring to our relationships, that we have not already got?

Well, none of us are perfect and no one has perfect relationships. Some of our relationships can actually be very challenging. But God **is** perfect, and he wants the very best for you, the very best for you as individuals, the very best for you as a couple, and the best for you in all your relationships. For that to happen, he needs to get involved with both of you.

Instead of living life just on the surface with all its visible issues, he can help you go deeper with him and draw from his treasure trove – he can produce characteristics in you that will enhance your life whatever it throws at you.

The passage we read from Galatians lists what St. Paul calls the Fruits of the Spirit. They include Joy, patience, peace and self-control etc. Things that we could all do with more of

When you are sad, he can lift you with his joy.

When you are frustrated, he can bring you patience?

When you are aggravated, he can bring you self-control?

When you are anxious and worrying, he can bring you peace?

And there are other great fruits mentioned too.

But there is one hidden treasure in the bible, which perhaps reflects more of his light than any other gem, and that is his special love. Jesus wants to bring the love of God to you, and develop this love within you, to share with each other.

Paul describes this love in 1 Corinthians 13

It is a love that is patient and kind; not jealous or proud; not ill-mannered or irritable; It is a love that tells the truth; does not keep a record of wrongs, and never gives up.

**That is real treasure**, that is worth digging for, that is worth giving up lesser stuff for.

### **Prayer**

It is my prayer today that you go deeper, and both embrace Jesus in the Bible, in the Church, and in your marriage. In doing so, I pray that you will be truly blessed by the fruit of the Spirit. I pray that God's amazing love will flow in you and through you. And in that love I pray that you will be faithful to each other and to God as long as you live. I bless you both, Lewis and Tammy, and your marriage with the Love God in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth Amen.

**Matthew 13v44** (NIV) - "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

**Galatians 5v22-23.** (The Message) What happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.