

The Kingdom of Heaven is like...

☆ ...hidden treasure (v.44)

☆ ...a pearl of great price (vv.45-46)

☆ ...a net let down...and caught (vv.47-52)

In the name of Jesus, who makes God's kingdom come, dear fellow disciples of our Lord:

It is rather comical how sometimes people think pastors can just look in a secret book to find ready written sermons for preaching. That could reduce preparation to a few minutes and leave more time for fishing and golf. But it's surely not the way we train our pastors when we start them off with Latin and German or Spanish in high school, then add Greek and Hebrew in college. By the time we reach Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, we're ready to study the Old Testament as God wrote it in Hebrew, and the New Testament in the Holy Spirit's heart language of Greek. The cost of this training is enormous both to the Synod and to the future pastors in long hours of study. But look at the value when we come to the words of our Lord in this Gospel Lesson for the 10th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. The Biblical languages serve as a heavy duty hitch to back the big boat trailer into the lake and cruise away with our Savior as He teaches us three parables. **The Kingdom of Heaven is like...**

☆ ...hidden treasure (v.44)

In a preaching refresher course last week our professor pointed out that every parable is different. Yes, each one is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," as we learned in Sunday School 101, but we need to look closely for the special lesson our Lord is emphasizing here. What makes this *Parable of the Hidden Treasure* different from every other parable Jesus taught? And what distinguishes it from the other two in our text today? Your list might be different, but here's mine.

Let's say you were the son of a pioneer farmer who remembered your dad and grandfather plowing the fields with draft horses. Now you have your plow hooked up to the first tractor in the county all ready to show off a little to your neighbors. Things go well for the first fifty yards. You're starting to feel pretty good about yourself. But then the inevitable. You hit a huge rock just under the surface. It jerks off the rear of your tractor and destroys your plow. You just found out why they invented the shear pin. Better to replace a cheap pin than the whole machine.

Some people "find" the kingdom of heaven by accident. Only the rock would have to be a chunk of gold because Jesus says, "***The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field....***" Maybe he was a hired man, or he stubbed his toe in the tall grass. But as soon as he realized what it was, he hid the treasure again and quietly went away. Barely able to hold his excitement, he "***sold all he had and bought that field.***" You might not have come looking for God's kingdom. Maybe you first came to church because a loved one invited you. But when you suddenly realize the value of this "***treasure,***" you can see how it's worth extra time in Bible Information Class to take it all in. It's worth more than all the rest of your possessions combined. **The Kingdom of Heaven is like...a hidden treasure...and like...**

☆ ...a pearl of great price (vv.45-46)

At first glance, this might seem like the same parable. But look at the difference in discovery. There's no accident here. This is a "***merchant,***" a businessman who knows what he's looking for. He's been all over the world searching for that single pearl beyond the price of any other. With his connections maybe he wants to resell it. But then his eyes finally fasten on that **pearl of great price**, and he knows this will not be for sale. It is, in fact, so precious, that everything he owns he sells to buy that pearl.

There are people who have heard about the greatness and beauty of God's kingdom who are powered by the message of the Gospel to seek earnestly until they find it. They fulfill God's promise through Jeremiah: ***"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*** (29:13)

We heard a good example in today's Old Testament Lesson. Young Solomon was just beginning his reign when, ***"during the night in a dream"*** the LORD Jehovah appeared to offer him a blank check: ***"Ask for whatever you want me to give you."*** We might have gone for the lottery or something like that. But Solomon did not ask for long life, wealth or the death of his enemies. He recognized the limitations of his earthly kingdom compared to the kingdom of heaven. So Solomon asked for ***"a discerning heart"*** – לֵב שֹׁמֵעַ – literally: *a hearing heart, or a heart with ears*. All his wealth could not buy this. Only God in grace could grant it. And He did. Solomon's *heart with ears* was listening when two prostitutes came to court claiming a live baby was theirs, but not the dead baby. Remember Solomon's command that the baby be cut in half and divided between them? His ***"discerning heart,"*** living large in the kingdom of heaven, knew where this was going. And when one prostitute pleaded, "Let the boy live!" the wise young king concluded she must be the baby's mother, not the one who wanted him divided. (1 Kings 3:24-27)

Have you tripped over the kingdom of heaven to find it? Have you purposely gone looking for it? Either way, it's worth everything you have to be under God's gracious rule. But strange as that may sound, it may seem even more unlikely that **The Kingdom of heaven is like...**

☆ **...a net let down...and caught (vv.47-52)**

In a sense we do not ***"find"*** the kingdom of heaven; it finds us. For ***"the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish."*** Not one of them got up that morning, drank his fish juice and thought, "Today, I wanna be caught in a net." They did not see it coming. None went looking for it. In fact, they swam hard the other way until they ran into the net on the far side. Escape was futile. The fisherman knew when it was ***"full"*** to pull in for the harvest. There is a limit on this time of grace. Judgment Day comes surely whether you want to face God or not.

"The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous," and that's when the sorrow begins for all who rejected Jesus Christ in unbelief. They suddenly realize how wrong their jealousy and envy of Christians has been. But all the love they knew from believing family members is severed forever. The ***"just,"*** however, know no sorrow because they fully realize how good and kind God was all along to them and their unbelieving relatives. ***"Christ died for all"*** (2 Corinthians 5:15). God declared the whole world, "Not guilty!" by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. No one will be lost unless he refuses to believe God's Word and trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. There is no second chance to keep looking for the ***"hidden treasure"*** or the ***"pearl of great price."*** ***"At the end of the age"*** the ***"basket"*** of heaven or the ***"fiery furnace"*** of hell is the final destination of souls.

Luther's *Small Catechism* explains the Second Petition, "Thy kingdom come," like this: "God's kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us and to many others....God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven."¹

Almost like another parable, our Lord concludes: ***"Every teacher of the law [i.e., God's Word] who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."*** The ***"old"*** we already knew, but gladly taste again like your favorite candy or that special microbrew for good times with a few close friends. Our fellowship of faith in Jesus as our Savior is always enriching with ***"old"*** truths that renew our hearts as we also learn ***"new"*** things. All this has been treasured up in God's Word by the dear Holy Spirit. **Hidden treasure, a pearl of great price, a net let down** – that's what **The Kingdom of Heaven is like....** Jesus, rule my heart and life by your Word of grace! Amen.

¹ LUTHER'S CATECHISM. *The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and an Exposition for Children and Adults Written in Contemporary English*. David P. Kuske. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982, pages 300ff.