

**Sermon:** Knowing the cost of everything but the value of nothing!

**Reading:** Matthew 13:24-52

### **Introduction**

Oscar Wilde famously penned the phrase, 'Knowing the price of everything but the value of nothing'. We all like a bargain. How many will pop into a shop when the sign in the window reads, 50% off or closing down sale hoping to bag a bargain.

I served my time as a carpenter and joiner when I left school. I soon discovered when it comes to tools its better paying the little bit extra to get the quality, rather than settling for the cheaper option. Another phrase which fits here is, 'Buy cheap pay twice!' Unless you are unfortunate when it comes to buying tools, you get what you pay for! Quality products come with a higher price tag but they are usually worth the extra cost. There are times when I was tempted and bought the cheaper versions only to regret it. The phrase knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing has a ring of truth about it.

When it comes to the Scriptures do we really know the true value of this precious book or do we not place much value on it at all? Our answer will shape our devotional time with God. If we have a low view of Scripture, we will probably conclude, it is not relevant to my life so don't read it. If we hold to a higher view of Scripture we will give it higher priority in our prayer and devotional times with God. We will purposely set time aside to study it and mine the depths of its truths, seeking new treasures as we read and study.

The Scriptures are inspired writings of the revelation of God to mankind. The Creator's book to His created beings if you like. Holy Spirit, inspired the writers throughout the ages with words designed to feed our souls. God proves Himself as the inspiration behind the text as the writers are recording and preaching about things which at the time had not taken place. The prophetic utterances and the fulfilment of these messages have been proved accurate and true, concluding only God can be its author. The words in this sacred book are holy and provided especially for us.

So then, if we hold to a high view of Scripture as God's revealed word to the world, we have a great and wonderful hope. We can surely trust in the promises made to us on the pages of these holy texts. For Jesus says all of the scriptures are written about Him, they are about a Saviour who graced us with His presence, living our life, bearing our griefs and dying our death, taking upon Himself the sins of the world. His teachings were unlike anything ever heard before or ever since. His miracles still astound us today. His birth, life, death and resurrection changed the timelines of history, dividing into two, BC/AD. The empty tomb remains to this day! This is what makes Christianity unique among all other religions of the world. God gave us His Word and kept His word by conquering death. Therefore His Living Word is alive today and forevermore.

Don't just listen to others speak about Jesus, we have been given an amazing opportunity to come to know Him for ourselves. Didn't Jesus say, 'Come to me?' Don't be a casual hearer of the word but come, get to know the One whom the Scriptures have been pointing to all through history and revealing to us His glorious revelation to the world.

In our reading today, Jesus continues to teach in parables about the Kingdom and in our reading today continues the seed theme in the parable about a mustard seed. The theme focusses how small this seed is compared to other seeds, it looks so unassuming, almost insignificant and yet when it dies it springs to life and grows large, it blesses creation

around is as the birds nest in its branches while others can rest in the shade out of the hot sun.

It's fascinating when we consider how much information is encoded into each tiny seed. The instructions how it is to grow and what it will become are all recorded in detail in each tiny seed. When it finds a good place to germinate, it grows as the creator intended. So reliable the instructions contained within this seed, the farmer can rely on the author who wrote them to produce a harvest again! Likewise the Scriptures are our instruction manual which enables us to grow in the image of the one who created us. We should never neglect the Scriptures, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and prayer times with our maker who gives us life, sustains us and helps us to grow.

### **More than a famous Rabbi**

I want to focus not on the seed parables today but on the rich treasures parables. At this point in Jesus' ministry His fame is spreading. Many people want to hear this itinerant rabbi preach. The crowds gather with excitement and great expectation? Everyone wondering what this Rabbi is going to say, what words of wisdom, what message of hope, what will He say about the Kingdom of God? Suddenly they see Jesus stand as He climbs up on a rock so the crowds can see Him. A hush descends across the gathered multitude, all eyes are fixed on Him.

Jesus begins His sermon, 'A sower who went out to sow seed!' He goes on to speak about weeds in the field which an enemy had planted! Then starts speaking about a tiny mustard seed! Can you imagine the reaction of the casual hearers? 'I thought He would be more inspiring, more dynamic and have better sermons than these. They probably thought we've had wasted journey. I wonder how many left saying, I didn't get anything from worship today? The casual hearers leave disappointed and unimpressed by His preaching!

### **Hidden treasures!**

However, Jesus continuing to teach in parables begins speaking about hidden treasures. It seems the penny has dropped with the disciples, they have finally worked out how to interpret the hidden message of the kingdom from within the parables. In the early teachings the disciples had to ask Jesus to explain the meaning of the parables. This time Jesus asks the disciples, have you understood the parables? Have you grasped the point of the message of the kingdom? Their reply now is, 'Yes!'

So what are these parables about? Both these men in the parables were persuaded, convinced by what they had discovered was so precious, it was worth giving up everything they had in order to gain the treasure they had found. Both men sought to seize the opportunity with both hands, regardless of the cost!

Can you imagine the reactions of those who knew these men? How many would have mocked them, selling everything they owned to gain something that seemed so unassuming, like a field, or a pearl! Their friends may have attempted to talk them out of making such a rash and foolish decision! However nothing would dissuade these men because they knew something more valuable was now theirs. The sacrifice was worth the cost. These men counted the cost because they recognised the true value, the true worth of such a precious treasure.

### **So what was this treasure Jesus was speaking of?**

When a person becomes truly aware of presence of God as a reality in this world it can be earth shaking and mind blowing. Imagine you have been told all your life that there is nothing outside of this world, we are here purely by chance, by a cosmic accident and

when life is over we return to dust for eternal darkness. Everything is lost, our loves, hopes, dreams, memories are nothing more than a series of electrical impulses and neurones, that will simply be turned out one day as one snuffs out a candle or switches of a light. Never to shine any longer, eventually all memories of the person known to others will also be lost with each new generation until even the memories are gone. Lost for eternity. Imagine in this world you have been told there is no truth, everything is simply relative which makes life really unsettling and confusing, good becomes evil and evil becomes good. There is ultimately no justice, the poor will remain poor, the oppressed remain in bondage and the hopeless remain lost. Imagine being told all your life we are nothing more than an evolved animal at the top of the food chain. Life has no meaning or purpose beyond the opportunities we seize today. Imagine a world where every mistake we have ever made and the shame we feel has to be carried daily, unable to loose or free ourselves from the chains and anchors that hold us to the past and the guilt preventing us from moving forward, only thoughts we have for the future is knowing the older I get the more mistakes I will make until in the end I will take my last breath and everything that was good will be lost. Can you imagine living in that darkened world?

Then by some amazing chance a book is found, it's a really old book which has been lost in time and buried in history. The pages speak of a world created by a wonderful designer, held together with such complexity only a genius could have thought it up. A great genius of immense intelligence and unbending love. Then you discover this genius not only created every living thing but also created us in His likeness, with the intention of being in a relationship with us as a loving Father has with his child. A God who delights to have fellowship with me and can take away my burdens and wash me clean from my shame and remove my guilt! Can you imagine the stark difference that would make to our world when all we had ever believed was a lie and was wrong? Would it not feel like a light of hope has been switched on in an otherwise darkened world. Would this make a difference?

This is the whole point of the parable. These two men in Jesus' parable both discovered something so precious, it was mind blowing and life changing. Jesus describes it as treasure hidden in a field or a pearl so wondrous in its uniqueness, it's the great prize of all collectors. Both men in their delight and joy were prepared to make ultimate sacrifices to their lives in order to obtain what they had discovered.

### **All need a saviour**

Only the Christian persuaded of Jesus' infinite value and worth is prepared to give up all for Jesus. Consider the disposition of these two men in the parables, they gave up everything for what they had found with.....

Extreme excitement,

Joyful jubilation,

Unreserved response,

Immediate intensity.

They didn't wait, they seized the moment and grasped it with all they had.

How foolish would the men in the parable have looked if the one who found the treasure hidden in a field simply buried it again and said to himself, I will come back when I retire from all my labours when I have more time or when I'm nearing the end of my life!

Or if the pearl collector had said, even though this is so unique and nothing in the whole of the world compares to it, I will carry on seeking and see if I can get a bargain somewhere else. Unfortunately this is the response of many who hear the good news in the world today.

This parable must have been so important for Matthew to hear, I imagine he understood it straight away, because he was the one who had discovered the treasure hidden and gave up all he had to gain this wonderful treasure this pearl of great price. Think about it, Matthew discovered something of immense value it was a great prize indeed, he was prepared to leave his tax booth, quit his job, leave behind his lucrative career, give up his status and wealth in order to follow Jesus. How blessed are we today he did, because we are able to read his eye witness testimonies of Jesus and accounts of the Saviours love.

### **Fishing Parable**

The final parable Matthew records in this section is about a fisherman casting his net and a great haul of fish are caught. When dragged ashore it is filled with many types of fish. Then comes the sifting and sorting, the separating good from bad. This parable is similar to the weed parable Jesus told earlier. It's the same point Jesus is making. There is coming a time when the angels will be sent out to gather the weeds and separate them from the wheat, just as the fish are separated by the fishermen. The good are gathered into the kingdom and the bad are destroyed. A scary thought indeed. How those who have rejected the Saviour love will gnash and grind their teeth in outer darkness on the day of separation.

Judas' places his value on Jesus as 30 pieces of silver! Sadly many in the world value Jesus to be even less than that thinking He is of no worth, no treasure worth having, not worth the time or the effort never mind the sacrifice.

However for the Christian, they have discovered an immense prize, a treasure of great gain and pearl of great price nothing in the world compares to it and so gaining this treasure is worth everything.

Peter said to Jesus, "we have given up everything for you and Jesus replies, "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (**Mark 10:29–31**).

### **Summary**

Following Jesus requires sacrifice, Jesus wants us to know our sacrifices aren't in vain and there's nothing we can surrender that exceeds what's attained in following Him. Jesus says, 'Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you, ask and you will receive'. Jesus will turn no one away and will take away our burden, guilt shame and sorrow, offering us forgiveness and reconciliation. Jesus is the great pearl and hidden treasure, when we discover Jesus and accept Him as our Saviour through repentance and faith, we give our lives to Him and let Him reign in our hearts, eternity in the heavenly kingdom become ours.

This is not simply not pie in the sky when we die, its life in all of its peace, contentment and joy today, knowing our saviour walks with us, talks with us and will guide us all the way home. Remember Jesus tells us to count the cost, but do so knowing the true value of knowing the saviour. The sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd and they will not listen to another. Recognising the voice of the Good Shepherd is worth everything. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Don't just listen to what others have to say about the world but what does Jesus have to say about us and the world? Find out and commune with Him for ourselves. Discover the riches hidden in His word in the sacred texts and receive all that He has prepared for us. **Amen**