

Worship Service for August 23rd, 2020

Finding The Treasure

Welcome

Welcome back to the kitchen table and also to the last full week of August. It's hard to believe that the summer has passed so quickly but let's hope that the long term weather predictions, calling for a summer like September, come true, but judging from the amount of rain the past couple of weeks some of us may have to let up on those rain prayers that we were all saying earlier in the summer.

This week we will be mailing out our reopening guidelines for us to gather safely in person this fall and I ask you to read through them and reach out to myself or the Covid committee if you have any questions or concerns.

Also if you are able please take a moment to fill out our on-line questionnaire found here on our Facebook Page or at the following link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfc6MKphh08-izA3UIh8czWywlkINy8AJ-9hGJI0jgu2CbrRQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

So let us once again gather in Spirit, praising the creator as we worship together, let us pray::

Opening Prayer

God of abundant life, Jesus taught that us that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.

In this time together, we come bringing our treasures—
all that we have and all that we are.

We come seeking Your treasure—
treasure that does not fade, decay, or disappoint.
Share with us the treasure of Your Kingdom,
that we may boldly share it with others. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

Our opening Song is entitled "We Praise You" and is sung by the artist Matt Redman. Enjoy.

Scripture

Like last week we continue to look at the parables of Jesus and perhaps one of his shortest stories is found in the gospel of Matthew 13:44-46
The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl (NIV)

⁴⁴ "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.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Meditation - Finding the Treasure

In 2001 a young couple in Britain saw a TV report about an unclaimed UK lottery ticket – and quickly realized it was their own. They searched high and low for the ticket, turning their house upside down but the ticket was nowhere to be found. Finally, sadly, they realized they must have thrown it away.

They then contacted Camelot, the UK National Lottery provider, to tell them what had happened, and even managed to successfully prove that they had indeed bought the ticket in question. However, the appeal was launched after the 30-day limit, and Camelot decided that they could not break this rule. This meant that the couple had to come to terms with missing out on £3,011,065 – the highest ever unclaimed prize in the UK at the time.

They were just that close to owning a treasure. Or as Maxwell Smart Agent 86 would say “Missed it by That Much”

Have you ever stumbled upon a treasure? Or did you ever set out to find one, and search and search until you did?

What is a real treasure, anyway? And, is there anything—anything at all, anything anywhere in life—that is worth having, above all else? And, supposing there is—what would you be willing to give up in order to have it?

Two of the shortest stories Jesus ever told were about finding a

treasure. We read them a few minutes ago from Matthew's Gospel, chapter 13. Each story is only one or two verses long.

The first is about a man out walking in a field, the second about a merchant who bought and sold pearls. Both men discover a treasure. But both of them pay the highest price in order to get it.

What is the treasure, anyway? And, is it worth the price? That's what we want to find out.

Probably the merchant looking for pearls is a man who knows his trade. He's like a modern-day antique dealer: he knows at a glance what he is looking at, what he should have to pay for it, what he can sell it for. He necessarily knows all of that: that's the way he makes his money.

So when someone offers him a pearl that is a shade off-colour, or a little out-of-round, he at first pretends that he isn't interested. Then, by and by, when the time is right, he may make an offer—next to nothing, to begin with, and then wait to see what happens. If the seller refuses the offer, maybe he'll make a higher offer. Maybe he won't. After all, there are lots of pearls out there. And, really, what he is interested in is the best.

Still, never in his life has he seen the perfect pearl. Always, his trained eye can spot a flaw somewhere: tiny, perhaps, invisible to the average person. Sometimes even invisible to the dealer who is offering it to him. There, on the underside, the slightest trace of a different colour. There, when you roll it across your palm, an

ever-so-slight unevenness, that makes it worth only a fraction of what it might otherwise sell for.

Sometimes, when the dealer argues with him, he patiently points out the problem. Sometimes he just walks away. But always, he is haunted by the possibility: somewhere, some day, just perhaps, he will find the perfect pearl. Maybe it is out there somewhere. Maybe it is. And he will keep on looking. He will keep on looking until he finds it.

“Now, sir, here is a most excellent pearl. Look at this one, will you? You’ve never seen one like this before!”

A shrewd dealer is holding out his hand, and on his palm is the most beautiful pearl the merchant has ever seen. He gasps involuntarily, then quickly recovers his composure. He can’t let this dealer see that he is too interested.

He takes the pearl and gently places it on his own palm. He rolls it over with his fingertip. There are no marks on it. It has no flaws. It is a perfect colour.

He rolls it back and forth across his hand. The pearl seems perfectly round. He can’t resist setting it on the dealer’s table, and rolling it back and forth on the level surface. It rolls exactly as it should.

After all these years, and all his searching, he has found the perfect pearl.

Normally, at this point, he would make an offer—a low offer, to see what the response would be. But this time, he forgets himself and asks, instead.

“What would you take for this one?”

The dealer’s eyes are crafty, and they flash as he speaks. He will strike a hard bargain. He knows the worth of what he is selling. He names his price, and waits.

The figure is ridiculous—astronomical. The merchant doesn’t have that kind of money. He can’t possibly afford it. He would be insane to even consider it.

But there is no point in a counter-offer. The dealer knows the worth of what he is selling. He will take his asking price or nothing.

The merchant is struggling. He can’t possibly afford it, and yet this is exactly what he has been looking for all his life. This moment will never come again.

The dealer is watching him closely, saying nothing, waiting.

The merchant knows that if he is to buy the pearl, he will have to give up everything else he owns. He will have to sell it all, everything, to raise the money for this one pearl. But it is the one he has been searching for. He has finally found it—and, he suddenly says to himself, nothing will keep him from having it now.

“I’ll take it,” he says, finally. “But you’ll have to keep it for me. It’ll take me a few days to raise the money. But I will be back.

You won't sell it to anyone else, will you?"

The dealer says that they have a deal, drops the pearl into a little leather bag, and sets it to one side. The merchant rushes home and has the biggest yard sale imaginable.

A few days later, now owning only the clothes on his back, a trembling pearl merchant watches as the dealer slowly counts the money he has just been given, and then hands over the tiny-perfect treasure. The merchant now owns what he has looked for all his life.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls, Jesus says. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it [Matthew 13:45-46].

Is the treasure worth it? What do you think?

The world is filled with people who are looking for the treasure. If there is something in life that is worth having, something that is worth holding onto, something that will last forever, they want it. And they are constantly looking for it.

Often they look for it in all the wrong places: they look for it through falling in love; they look for it through their career, through the things they buy and collect, or in the recognition others give them. But they soon discover that none of these things is really the treasure they are seeking. So they keep on looking, without finding.

Sometimes, in the end, their search leads them to Jesus. When

they meet Jesus, he says to them, “I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is that I have exactly what you have always been looking for. I am the Keeper of the Treasure, and the first part is free of charge.

I will give you forgiveness for the past and a brand-new life here and now, just because I love you. But if you want this new life to become a part of you—if you really want the treasure to have and hold forever—it will cost you all that you have. So what do you say?”

And some people say yes. Some say no.

You see, the Gospel offers us a whole new life, a whole new beginning, and it is free. It is free because we could never deserve it, we could never earn it, we could never buy it and we could never twist God’s arm to persuade him to give it to us. The new life God offers us is a free gift.

But—to collect it, to receive it, we have to make a trade-in. We have to trade in our old life, as good or as bad as it may be, to receive his new life. So before we are done, the new life costs us everything we have.

One side of the coin is this: the forgiveness and new life Jesus gives us, the treasure he offers, is a free gift. The other side of the coin is that it costs us everything we have.

Since it costs everything we have, only one question really matters in the end: *is the treasure worth it?* What do you think?

When Jesus offers us membership in the kingdom of heaven, and the price of the treasure is all that we are and all that we have, is it worth it?

Maybe we should ask some people who might know.

Peter, you were a disciple. You gave your life because of the Kingdom. Was it worth it?

Paul, you found the treasure, and you paid the price. Was it worth it?

Martin Luther King Jr, was it worth it?

Mother Teresa, tell us: was it worth it?

Listen carefully. I think we just may hear the answer. Thanks Be To God.

Let Us now ask God to Intercede on our behalf. Let Us Pray

Intercessory Prayer

Lord, we give you thanks for the word that you hide like a treasure in our heart, for the leaven which is able to penetrate to every area of our life - for the seed that is able to grow into a mighty plant. Help us to value that which you have given us - to make following Christ the most important thing in our daily lives - to concentrate above all upon doing your will and sharing your love and the good news you have proclaimed through Jesus with one another and with the world.

We give you thanks for the wonders of our heritage and for the new things that you continue to do in our midst. We praise you for the teachings of the prophets, for the law you revealed unto Moses, for the grace and the love that you poured out and continue to pour out through Christ - and for the guidance, the strength, the wisdom, the peace, the joy, the patience, and the gentleness that you bestow upon us through your Spirit. Help us to

value both the old and the new and to become worthy teachers of the lessons of your eternal kingdom.

We pray for the people around us this day - for those who are upon our hearts and minds because of a need that they have...

A TIME OF SILENCE

Bless each one according to the need that they have and bring all to a closer walk with you.

We ask you to hear all our prayers, O God, in the name of the one who taught us to pray... Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen

Now some of you may have listened to our closing song a number of weeks ago when Heather our organist shared it on Facebook, but it is surely worth another listen as this lady, 94 year old Nita Talley's herself is truly a treasure in her own right. May Her version of "One Day at a Time" touch your heart. Have a Blessed week until we meet again.

https://youtu.be/-z_Ze5ibRxE