

“Finders, Keepers—Losers, Weepers”—Matthew 13:44

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is “Finders, Keepers—Losers, Weepers”, is Matthew 13:44 → *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Have you ever found something, told someone about your “find” and heard them claim that it really belonged to them? I can remember doing this with my sisters when I was young. Of course, I’d respond with a sarcastic, “finders, keepers—losers, weepers.” Usually it didn’t mean that I’d get to keep my “find.” Most of the time it just caused us to start another fight that mom or dad had to break up.

However, the meaning of that phrase is true in many ways. For the person who makes the “find” there is usually a lot of joy over what he found because he gets to keep it. But the person who loses something usually feels quite bad, especially if what she lost had special meaning or value to her. For her, losing could certainly result in weeping.

Our lives are full of searching for a “find” of one kind or another. We search for better and more efficient ways to do things. Some people are on a constant search for purpose, meaning or contentment in life. Some

are searching for their “big break” in life to become successful or rich or whatever. There is searching the internet when on a quest for a particular product, what many refer to nowadays as “research.” Naturally, when looking for the perfect “find” on our shopping searches, we want the best quality for the lowest price.

Since humans, by nature, are seekers, it seems only natural that Jesus used the example of *treasure hidden in a field, which a man found* to describe our relationship with God (i.e. *the kingdom of heaven*). This *treasure* was so valuable to him that *in his joy he* went and sold all that he had and bought *that field*. His “find” created so much joy in him that he was willing to give up everything this life had to offer in order to acquire this treasure for himself.

The parable pulls us into a search with questions like: What is the treasure and who is the man? If the treasure is salvation (i.e. eternal life in heaven) and the man is you and me (i.e. human beings) then the application seems to be that we would do anything to obtain salvation. Making the comparisons in this manner can take one down a path of trying to make sure his eternal salvation is secured by a price which he pays, generally in the form of giving, good works, generosity and philanthropic endeavors of various kinds.

Unfortunately, such efforts cannot deal with your sins which are the main culprit keeping you from obtaining the treasure. Even God’s people

of faith in the Old Testament, referred to by Yahweh as *My treasured possession among all the peoples* (cf. Exodus 19:5), had to confess in Isaiah 64:6 → *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our **righteous deeds** are like a polluted garment.* You could never do enough, pay enough or give enough to cover the debt which your sins have accumulated in the presence of the holy God. Your life needs to be ransomed, freed from your slavery to sin and the devil. Psalm 49:7-9 says: *Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit.*

God's revelation of our lost condition in sin drives this parable in a different direction. What if Jesus is the man in the parable and you are the treasure? Jesus left the glory of heaven, coming into the field of the world (cf. Matthew 13:38), in order *to give His life as a ransom for we who were lost in our sin* (cf. Mark 10:45).

Consider it: In the darkness of your sin, the devil striving to make you feel worthless, you are worth so much to Jesus, so valuable to Him, that He willingly chose to pay the accumulated debt for your sin. His good works were in perfect accord with obedience to God's Law. Giving His life as the perfect sacrifice on the cross for you was the perfect purchase price to ransom you from hell. His rising from death secured your being delivered from your burial in the ground. You truly are *the joy*

that was set before Him which Hebrews 12:2 says was the reason that He *endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God!*

It is interesting that the man in the parable did not simply find the treasure, dig it up, take it home and say, “finder keepers—losers, weepers.” Instead, he left it where it rightly belonged in the possession of its proper owner. He could do nothing with it on His own terms. Rather, it could only be obtained on the legal terms specified by the owner. Thus, Jesus too submitted Himself to His heavenly Father’s terms to restore His *treasured possession* back into a proper relationship with Him. Philippians 2:7-8 says Jesus *emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant . . . and . . . He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*. He paid the price **required by your Creator** in order to redeem you back into a perfect relationship with Him. He willingly did it **on His Father’s terms**.

This wonderful work of Jesus for you can drive the parable even further. What if the man in the parable is you and the treasure is this good new (i.e. the gospel) of Jesus’ work for your sin? The people to whom Jesus was speaking the parable were ones who were already experiencing *the kingdom of heaven* by faith, embodied in the Person & Work of Jesus, the Christ. The proper response to the hearing the Gospel of *the kingdom of heaven* proclaimed is repenting of your sins

and giving up all human efforts you use to define your eternal relationship with God.

Paul had such a perspective after he “stumbled” upon the treasure of the Gospel by Christ’s doing (cf. Acts 9:1-19). He considered himself a pretty good asset to God’s kingdom as a member of His *treasured possession among all the peoples* (cf. Exodus 19:5), a Pharisee of Pharisees, totally righteous and blameless as to God’s Law (cf. Philippians 3:4-6)—or so he thought. Once he heard the Gospel his life was completely redirected. From that point on he considered everything else in his life as *loss for the sake of Christ*. He considered it all *rubbish . . . because of the **surpassing worth** of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord and having a righteousness . . . that comes only through faith in Christ*. The Holy Spirit had revealed the *treasure* that surpasses the value of anything else this life or world could give or offer him.

As God’s treasured people, having been found and claimed in Christ Jesus, we have the privilege of sharing the treasure of the gospel of *the kingdom of heaven* with others. His desire is to deliver us all from the eternal *weeping and gnashing of teeth* in hell (cf. Matthew 13:42,50). When it comes to losing, Jesus says in Luke 9:24-25 → *Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?*—that is, his soul in hell.

In faith you lose your life in Christ by repenting of your sins and trusting in the atoning work of Jesus alone. You find comfort, confidence and strength as you cling to His Person & Work **alone**, the treasure of your life in the midst of so many temptations thrown at you to give it all up. You are kept in His grace by the power of the Holy Spirit working through His means of grace in your life. When you fall into sin and experience God's anger over your sin, you are reassured that *His anger is but for a moment, and His favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.* (cf. Psalm 30:5) Sorrow over your sins brings the proclamation that you are forgiven in Christ, your joy, your treasure. Amen.

*We have this treasure in jars of clay,
to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

(2 Corinthians 4:7)

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