

May 21, 2017

## WAYS THE KINGDOM IS FOUND

Matthew 13:44-46

I grew up in the house where my father grew up. He bought it from his mother when she moved to La Mesa, California. It wasn't huge, but it was tall. It had an immense attic. About the only time anyone ever went up there was to get the Christmas ornaments, stored in an ancient suitcase held together with strings. The opening to the attic was a big door in the upstairs hallway ceiling that my dad could pull down and then catch the ladder attached to it as it slid down to whoever was opening it. There were heavy counter-weights that kept the door closed and made sure that it didn't open too easily.

It was an adventure going up there. It was cold in the winter, and, hot in the summer. It was kind of dark, and, a little scary when I was little. There were two windows, one at either end; and one, the north window, had a huge heavy fan in front of it that was turned on in the summertime, once in a while. My father said that most of the stuff up there was just "old junk." But, today, I have the spinning-wheel at our house, an old sword (my brother Dan has another old sword), and some amazing memories.

One time, when I was about 14, I stayed up there to look around at some of the "old junk." Musty old clothes in a huge, heavy-plastic clothes hanger, a few old trophies of my dad's from when he was on the high school track team, some medals (which I took downstairs and asked him to explain to me. It was then that I began to realize that my dad had been a sort of hero in the Second World War). There was an old baseball mitt, there was some ancient, beat-up furniture, an old mirror, and some old art in dusty old frames. There was a whole box of photographs that I dragged down and had my dad tell us about. And there was a crumbling old box that had really old papers in it. This stuff was things my dad's mother had never tossed. I looked through this old box, sitting near the south window, and found a letter to Santa Claus from my dad's younger brother, Hugh, from when he was in Third Grade, asking for a red-rubber playground ball and a Chicago World's Fair ring!

Treasures! Some of my dad's "old junk" was treasure to me. I was thrilled to discover some of it. It told stories I had never heard till then. It brought back memories all but forgotten. I don't know if anything was worth much, but when we moved a few years later, I guess most of it either got tossed, given away, sold, or donated somewhere.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like hidden treasure. Finding it creates a sort of exhilaration so perfect that its discoverer does everything they can to assure its possession. I can imagine the man trying to act calmly as he goes to the landowner asking to buy his field. The original owner had no clue that there was treasure hidden out there. It's not unlike the way most of us take for granted the Church we belong to, not realizing the wonderful faith and loyal dedication that went into its having been established, built, sustained, and...rebuilt; not realizing that the faith it represents is more precious than silver or gold; and not really thinking about how the Gospel that is shared there is a glorious gift we all should cherish gladly!

For some scholars, pearls indicate the sea, which indicates the Gentiles. I like to think, rather, of depth, of straining to get the oysters, of opening the shells. I like to think of how a pearl is formed by the oyster's secreting a fluid, called nacre, around a grain of sand in order to make its sufferable presence more tolerable. A pearl is formed by the oyster's suffering! What pearls are we creating in our suffering? But...sometimes there is a great risk in trying to dive so deep. Is that what the Kingdom of Heaven is like? Yes! It's discovered unexpectedly, sometimes; and, it's found through some serious deep searching. It's too bad how most people don't want to go deeper!

But I think the important point is that heaven is something for which you would go to great extremes in order to acquire. Twice, Jesus says, "*He went away and sold all he had (everything he had)*"

*and bought that field (that pearl.)* (13:44b, 46) There is something very compelling about this extreme measure: Joy! The man who discovered the treasure in the field, *"in his joy, went and sold all he had..."*

I don't mind testifying to the wonderful joy I receive every time I open God's Word and study it, rediscovering the treasures it holds, seeking the pearl of great price there, knowing it's there, knowing it's about Jesus, my Lord, my Savior; wishing more were willing to join the search, or, just imagine the discovery. I think it's worth giving up everything else. Carol takes on a wonderful glow when she talks about the Bible. It should be that way for all of us who follow Christ, who know Him as Lord and King, and thereby know the Kingdom of Heaven in their midst! How precious is our faith! How rich we are to have discovered it! How beautiful is the Word of God! What a precious treasure!

If that's not something worth giving up everything for, at least, it is something worthy of making a priority!

That is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like!