

SURPRISED BY THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Mathew 13:44-46

“the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; in finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

In both of these parables, someone discovers something of value, whether a hidden treasure or a pearl of great value, and the person sells all that this person has in order to possess it.

The difference Jesus told in these two stories is this: In the first one, someone is not looking for the treasure or the kingdom of God, but just stumbles upon it while going about daily work.

I am reminded of the famous theologian C.S. Lewis who wrote the tales of Narnia and lots of theological books. In his book called Surprised by Joy he talks about his own conversion experience.

As he said, One day, in England where he was from, he got on a bus an unbeliever and got off the bus and he believed in God. He said it was nothing that he did that made it happen. He said to say that he somehow found God would be to say a mouse goes looking for a cat. It was all God's doing. We could say he stumbled upon the treasure hidden in the field. It came totally as a surprise.

The person in that first parable, was not out looking for a treasure in the field, but just stumbled upon it.

Maybe that has happened to some of you. Maybe you didn't go looking for God, but God found you, maybe in worship or in your family

Page 2

or in your reading, or in practicing the faith by reaching out to those in need.

God's kingdom maybe caught you by surprise.

Of course that is what happened to the Apostle Paul. He was out to persecute Christians when he was struck by God on the road to Damascus and his life was turned upside down.

Paul didn't expect God to surprise him in that way.

Maybe that happened to some of us. We might not have been looking for God, but to our surprise, God showed up. God found us.

God became so important to us that we can't imagine life without God.

Martin Luther once said that there is no such thing as life without God, because we all have gods or ultimate concerns of some kind. We are made that way.

I can't say that I found God in my life. God found me and God has never let me go.

I believe we have that experience Jesus talks about, of stumbling on this treasure hidden in our field, no matter what that may be for us which we stumble upon without even looking for it.

Or maybe our experience is more like the second parable Jesus told in today's Gospel reading. Maybe, for us, the kingdom of God is like a merchant who is out in search of fine pearls. After finding the pearl, the merchant sells all he has in order to purchase the one pearl.

In other words, maybe we have searched for God until we have somehow found God and given up all our other important interests or concerns to focus on God.

Page 3

Sometimes we are hungry and on a quest for meaning and when the kingdom is found, we recognize how valuable it is. Again, maybe it has come through reading and studying and or worship and lots of questions.

In these parables Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of God is right here right now, even though it may be invisible.

The kingdom of God is among us in every aspect of our lives changing and enlightening us.

Even when we think of ourselves as searchers for all of our lives, God is here with us breaking in in every way God can.

God is that treasure we stumble upon without even realizing we are looking.

God is that pearl we have been looking for when suddenly it happens that we have found it.

I am reminded of the dream that Jacob had as recorded in the book of Genesis chapter 28.

He had a dream that there was a ladder reaching up to heaven and angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

In the dream the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord of Abraham, your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your offspring.....Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Page 4

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord was in this place and I did not know it.”

At the end of a chapter in a book our pastor’s group is reading, the author says, “the world thinks Jesus is dead, but we know he isn’t.”

I think that is one of many powerful statements in the Bible. Whether we have stumbled across God’s kingdom like a buried treasure in a field or we have searched until we have found God’s kingdom like a pearl, we will look back and say, surely “THE LORD WAS IN THIS PLACE AND I DID NOT KNOW IT.”

THANKS BE TO GOD! AMEN