

The Joy of God's Kingdom: Priceless

Intro. There was a series of television commercials that listed the price of several items like tickets to a concert, \$200; dinner, \$150; being with your best friend, priceless. There is very little we would say is truly priceless. Family, friends, children and time with them. The focus of today's parables changes from the past two weeks. It is not about the Word of God growing in our hearts. It is an image of what the kingdom of heaven is like. The Lord spoke about how priceless it is not just to *discover* God's kingdom of heaven, but the *cost* we are willing to pay to *possess* it, to be *in* it.

I. The parables are based on the real life of people. The culture was farming and raising sheep and goats. Most people didn't have a bank or a safe deposit box to keep their valuables in, but they had a field or a

pasture. Because of the frequent conquest by different armies and roving bandits, they did what people have done for thousands of years and still do today: they buried their treasure in the back yard. If they died or were killed or forgot to draw a map with an "X" on it, it could be lost until someone stumbled on it. In the parable the one who found it knew the value, covered it up and sold everything to buy the field and the treasure in it. It implies he or she had no duty to report the treasure to the owner of the field. It is the old children's rhyme: "Finders keepers, losers' weepers." The same with the pearl of great price. The merchant was not required to tell the finder how perfect it was; he quietly made an offer and paid whatever was necessary to have it, like EBay. When I was growing up in Jacksonville, few people thought this area would ever be worth as

much as it is now. Somebody did. I should have bought.

Concl. We can be *very* single-minded when we are searching the web something we want. We don't like to wait – we want it now! We can find it, click on it and poof, it arrives on our devices or at our door, soon by drone! That same focus doesn't always apply to our search for the kingdom of heaven. It's something we **do** want, but we think it will still be there tomorrow. Again, like EBay, not so. The “harvest” doesn't have an end date. The main point about the treasure and the pearl seems to be *not just* the “great value” which is certainly incomparable for Christians. One commentator emphasizes it is not the price or the sacrifice to get something of great value, but the “**joy**” that comes from finding it (**it** being the

kingdom of heaven [D. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina*, p. 207]. Searching for what is of great value in the spiritual life is difficult; but finally **possessing** it is worth the sacrifice and the price. The paradox shown in the finding of the treasure and the pearl is how God's kingdom may be *stumbled* upon or after much *searching*. Once again it shows God's generosity to us. It doesn't matter **how** we find the kingdom of God. It matters greatly **what we do to keep it and live in it** [R. Karban, *America*, 7/27/17]. One of my favorite comics had the image of a playground and a waterslide. One of two people on the swings says, “It's not at all what I expected, but it works for me.” Whatever it really is doesn't matter if we are **in** that Kingdom of Heaven.