

Buried Treasure! Arrgg!

Intro. If we know anything about the history of Florida and the Caribbean, it is the story of pirates and buried treasure. There is certainly much treasure yet to be found on shipwrecks off the coast of Florida. Supposed maps to buried treasure are not uncommon. The Lord is not talking about pirate treasure that is hidden. His treasure is in plain sight.

I. In today's gospel the Lord used images of buried treasure and the perfect pearl. During the many wars of one king conquering another, people often hid their valuables. One easy way was to bury it until the fighting stopped. As happens, people forgot where they buried their valuables or they died without leaving a map. It was not unusual for another person to literally stumble on it. The person in the parable may have been just walking through the field and noticed something sticking out of the ground. Or they were working for the owner of the

field, plowing and found it. They quickly reburied it and quietly sold everything to buy the field. The treasure belonged to whoever owned the field.

Occasionally today someone remodeling a house accidentally stumbles on valuables hidden in a wall or attic, long forgotten by the owner. The other parable tells about a merchant who buys and sells pearls, *purposefully* searching for the perfect one. She or he looked at hundreds or even thousands before finally finding that perfect one and sold everything to buy it. Imagine the merchant's fist-pumping joy. The point is the people sacrificed everything to have what was valuable to them.

Concl. The treasure disciples are looking for is the kingdom of heaven. It does have a map called the Bible to help us find it and there are many people who will tell us how *they* found it. This "map" traces how the "treasure" that is salvation and redemption has been passed down through our family for

thousands of years. And like treasure of all kinds, faith can get lost, misplaced, ignored or given away. Sometimes while not looking for it, we trip over it accidentally, due to the joy of a birth or the pain of a death. That is God's gift of faith *finding us*. At other times we look long and hard before finding it. People go to distant lands, to mountains and deserts; to rivers and ocean beaches in search of God's kingdom. The Lord warned his disciples it was not necessary to go running all over the world, the kingdom of heaven was near, in our hearts. King Solomon was willing to forgo long life and wealth in exchange for a humble, understanding heart to lead his people to God's kingdom. Once upon a time, people were willing to sacrifice personal comfort for larger, important values. During the Second World War, a generation was willing to accept the rationing of gasoline, sugar and rubber to help the men and women have the supplies they needed. I am not sure

we are willing to sacrifice like that anymore. We like it better if *someone else* sacrifices. But I see hope. In the midst of all that is going on, some people are willing to sacrifice for the greater good. **How we find the kingdom of God may not be the most important part. Once we find it, what we are willing to give up to possess it. Each of us has to decide if the kingdom of heaven is something we value enough to sacrifice to keep.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft,

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