

# Treasures and Pearls and Nets full of Fish

Thomas Robinson, *Deeper with Jesus*, 3, February 16, 2014

*Matthew 13:44-52*

## Parable of the Treasure

<sup>44</sup> “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.

## Parable of the Pearl

<sup>45</sup> Again, the **kingdom of heaven** is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, <sup>46</sup> who, on finding **one pearl of great value**, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

## Parable of the Net

<sup>47</sup> Again, the **kingdom of heaven** is like **a dragnet** that was thrown into the sea and gathered [fish] of **every kind**. <sup>48</sup> When it was full, they drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.

<sup>49</sup> So it will be at the **end of the age**. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous <sup>50</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>51</sup> **Have you understood** all these things?”

They said to him, “Yes.”

## Parable of the Master of the House

<sup>52</sup> And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the **kingdom of heaven** is like a **master of a house**, who brings out of his treasure **what is new and what is old**.” <sup>53</sup> And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there....

*Matthew 6:33*

<sup>33</sup> “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

*Matthew 7:7*

<sup>7</sup> “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

*Matthew 9:10-13*

<sup>10</sup> And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many **tax collectors and sinners** came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with **tax collectors and sinners**?” <sup>12</sup> But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, *‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’* For **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.**”

*Isaiah 52:7-10; 53:1-5*

<sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains | are the feet of him who brings good news, | who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, | who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “**Your God reigns.**” | <sup>8</sup> The voice of your watchmen – they lift up their voice; | together they sing for joy; | for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. | ... <sup>10</sup> **The LORD has bared his holy arm** | before the eyes of all the nations, | and all the ends of the earth | shall see the salvation of our God. ...

<sup>53:1</sup> Who has believed what he has heard from us? | And **to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?** | <sup>2</sup> For he grew up before him like a young plant, | and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, | and no beauty that we should desire him. | <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men; | a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; | and as one from whom men hide their faces | he was despised, and we esteemed him not. | <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; | yet we esteemed him stricken, | smitten by God, and afflicted. | <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; | he was crushed for our iniquities; | upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, | and with his wounds we are healed.

## Seeing God's Kingdom and Looking Again

It must have been frustrating/challenging, listening to Jesus. Imagine you're a young man or woman in Galilee. You've heard about Jesus announcing God's kingdom. You've read your Bible. You know that's dangerous, powerful, wonderful stuff – Isa 52:7-10. You imagine your role....

Jesus does indeed talk about the kingdom. Sermon on the Mount (5-7). Discipleship (10). Other. He tells stories. But as you listen, where are you? Stubbing your toe on a treasure. Searching for a pearl. Just one of the fish in the sea. A scholarly scribe with treasures old and new. None of them really fits your imagination. Do you understand? Yes. No. You keep listening, following. The stories are simple, short, and strange. They're all about God's kingdom, but so different. Where's the shout, "Your God Reigns"? When does God bare his holy arm, and everyone sees?

## A Net full of Fish and Stuff

Perhaps most disturbing is the parable of the net – like the wheat and weeds (24-30, 36-43). A dragnet thrown into the sea pulls out everything, fish and tin cans. What kind of wonderful kingdom is that? Shouldn't the kingdom be pure, full of devoted disciples? Jesus was notorious for the company he kept – tax collectors and sinners. He seemed to contradict himself. His sermons seemed impossibly demanding, but he welcomed outrageous sinners.

It didn't build up your self-esteem to think of God catching you like a fish in a net. The kingdom was God's work. If you're really worried about its purity, that will happen, but it's God's work, not yours and it's for the end of the age. Right now, things are very mixed. You're a fish; swim. But deeper, Jesus knew that those who saw themselves as devoted and holy were also sinners. He knew Isa 52 flowed into Isa 53. Who really sees the Lord's arm bared? What is that great and glorious power? It is the suffering servant! The kingdom breaking in and we did not recognize it. But that way is God's way! His majesty, beauty, power in the servant's wounds that heal us.

## A Discovery that Changes Everything

That's what makes God's kingdom so wonderful and strange. Not something simple like the hundreds of political coups. Jesus pushes into our minds two splinters. Everyone is looking for meaning, deep satisfaction, something that makes a difference. Money? Fame? Power? Jesus says learning God's way, following his suffering servant, aligning your life with the love and purpose of the creator of everything (including you), that's what makes everything really count.

Two parables of discovery (accidental/purposeful). A treasure, a pearl. It was there but I had not seen it. The discovery changes the value of everything else, all past accumulations. They sell everything and buy that treasure, that pearl. How do you buy the kingdom? It catches you.

I like the idea of being a pearl connoisseur. But still, the parable ends crazy. I see the pearl buyer sitting there. His Keurig is gone. His 60" TV is gone. His computer and books and tools are gone. Everything. He sits on the curb in his last boxers holding that pearl. And he's smiling.

If you can get inside that smile, that joy, Jesus says, you know the wonder of God's kingdom. This is the kingdom that is personal, individual, but also cosmic and eternal. It is the frame that gives meaning to every struggle for justice and right in ordinary politics, that affirms the permanent value of every truth, every creation of beauty, that takes seriously human evil, sin, suffering, on every scale, but affirms that God takes on that suffering and creates life.

## Something Old, Something New

Do you understand? Jesus asks. Yes. No. The more you do, he says the more you will realize that what seems so radically new and challenging is in continuity with what God has been doing.

The wanderer, the pearl merchant, the fish, all become the master of the house in God's kingdom.