

# Matthew 13.44-46

- The discovery of the kingdom of heaven – it will change your life -

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## Introduction

- ❖ Did you already discover, the treasure, the value, and the richness of the Christian faith?
- ❖ Jesus told two very small stories, parables, to show what happens when someone discovers what the kingdom of heaven is all about.
  - It is about life in its fullness and the promises of God.
  - It is about wisdom, peace, grace, and salvation.
  - It is about righteousness and mercy.
  - It is about faithfulness, steadfastness, and perseverance.
  - It is about the joy, which God will provide.
  - It is about knowing God, through Christ Jesus, and living in his new community, created by his Spirit.
  - It is about a new family of brothers and sisters, who share the same faith.
  
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Matthew. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

## Context

Matthew 10:1-11:1	The mission of the twelve to proclaim the Kingdom of God
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<i>Jesus and the Crowds</i>	
Matthew 11:2-6	John the Baptist has questions about the identity of Jesus
Matthew 11:7-24	Jesus rebukes the crowds because of their unbelief
Matthew 11:25-27	Jesus praises the Father, who revealed the identity of Jesus to little children
Matthew 11:28-30	Jesus calls the weary to find rest and learn from him
<i>Jesus and the Pharisees</i>	
Matthew 12:1-12	The identity of Jesus – A healing The Pharisees resist Jesus
Matthew 12:13-21	Jesus fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-4
Matthew 12:22-37	A healing – The identity of Jesus The Pharisees resist Jesus
Matthew 12:38-45	The Pharisees ask a sign from Jesus to “prove” his identity
<i>Jesus, the Crowds, and his disciples</i>	
Matthew 12:46-50	“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”
Matthew 13:1-52	7 Parables
Matthew 13:53-56	Unbelief in Nazareth. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”

❖ The context reveals the following:

- John the Baptist, the crowds, and the Pharisees are questioning Jesus’ identity.
- The Pharisees’ resistance against Jesus increases.
- Jesus clarifies the reason behind their resistance and their unbelief:
  - At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, **because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.** Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Mt 11:25-27).

- “This is why I speak to them in parables: ‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “ ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. **For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.** Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (Mt 13:13-17).

Parable	Theme
<i>Addressed to the Crowds and the Disciples.</i>	
1. Mt 13:3-9	The sower. <i>The reception of the gospel.</i>
2. Mt 13:24-30	The weed. <i>The harvest and the judgment.</i>
3. Mt 13:31, 32	The mustard seed – <i>The growth of the Kingdom</i>
4. Mt 13:33	The yeast – <i>The hidden power of the Kingdom</i>
<i>Addressed to The disciples.</i>	
5. Mt 13:44	The hidden treasure – <i>The discovery of the Kingdom and joy</i>
6. Mt 13:45, 46	The merchant and the pearl – <i>The discovery of the Kingdom and joy</i>
7. Mt 13:47, 50	The fish. <i>The catch and the Judgment.</i>

- ❖ These seven parables can be grouped in three pairs of two and one concluding one.

## Form and structure

- ❖ Both parables show a similar threefold structure:

<i>The comparison</i>	“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.
<i>Action (1)</i>	When a man found it, he hid it again,
<i>Action (2)</i>	and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

<i>The comparison</i>	“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.
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Action (1)	When he found one of great value,
Action (2)	he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

- ❖ There are some similarities:
  - A treasure is hidden in a field = a merchant looking for fine pearl = the kingdom of heaven
  - When a man found it = when he found it
  - He sold everything he had and bought it (the field with the treasure)
  - Although “joy” is not mentioned in the second parable, it is not absent.
- ❖ There is one major difference:
  - In the first parable, the man **was not looking** or searching for a treasure, it is by “accident” he found it. The treasure is **passively** lying under the surface of the field.
  - In the second parable, the merchant **was looking** for fine pearls. The man knows that there must be some. He is **actively** looking for it.

### Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

- ❖ These two parables are part of a larger section (see above).
  - Jesus concluded the previous passage with: **“He who has ears, let him hear.”** At the same time, it is a strong appeal to the disciples to listen and to take time to think about the following short parables.
  - When Jesus finished these in total three parables, he asked his disciples: **“Have you understood all these things?”**
- ❖ The previous and the next parable are about the end of the age and the harvest of the righteous and the wicked.
  - **“So it will be at the end of the age.**  
The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.  
They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.  
Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt 13:40-43).
  - **“This is how it will be at the end of the age.**  
The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous

and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 13:49-50).

- ❖ These parables are addressed to the disciples in private. They were the first hearers.
  - As we read these parables, we belong to the next generations of hearers.
- ❖ Compare the themes of the parables with the themes of Psalm 1:

The righteous and the wicked	Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.
The joy of the righteous	But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.
The fate of the righteous and the wicked	Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

- ❖ There is probably a strong connection with the Book of Psalms and Proverbs.

#### Notice

- ❖ Davies and Allison remark: “Commentators have long discussed whether the finder of the treasure acts immorally or unlawfully when he covers it up and seeks to make it his own. Some have defended his actions as above reproach. Others have thought him to behave immorally. It is not easy to assess the issue. The story does not inform us on certain key points. What is the status of the finder? What is he doing in the field? How is the treasure discovered? How did it come to be where it is? What kind of treasure is it? Who owns the field? How did the owner come to own the field? **Without knowing such details one is hesitant to evaluate the legal or moral situation and even uncertain as to the value of discussing such. Certainly Jesus’ failure to remark on them makes one wonder how important they can be.**<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ It is not necessary to identify all aspects of these short parables.

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<sup>1</sup> Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 2, p. 436).

## Exposition

### Before and after

- ❖ These parables were addressed to the disciples. It is necessary to bear in mind that the opening and the closing verse of the whole passage are important:
  - “He who has ears, let him hear” (Mt 13:43).
  - “Have you understood all these things?” (Mt 13:51).
- ❖ Jesus told these two and the other parables after the crowds started questioning the identity and the authority of Jesus. Therefore we might draw the following conclusions.
  - The treasure of the Kingdom remains hidden to the crowds (Mt 13:34).
  - The great value of the Kingdom is not understood by the crowds (Mt

### Verse 44

- ❖ **“The kingdom of heaven.”**
  - This is the new community of Christ and his kingdom (Mt 28:18-20). This new community acknowledges God as the heavenly Father and each of its members as mothers, brothers and sisters:
    - “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mt 12:50).
    - It is a learning community: “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:20).
    - This community is characterized by mutual love (Jn 15:9, 10), forgiveness (Mt 18:21-35), serving each other (Mt 23:11), righteousness, grace, and mercy.
    - This community is ruled by the Spirit of God (1 Cor 12:12, 13).
- ❖ **“Is like a treasure.”**
  - When we take all these aspects of the Kingdom of God into account, we can easily understand why Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven with a treasure and a valuable pearl. Another aspect of this treasure is wisdom, the WISDOM of God.
    - “Turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Prov 2:2-5; Prov 16:16).

- The WISDOM of God is Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:31): “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”
- The apostle Paul wrote: “My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, **Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**” (Col 2:2, 3).
- “With me (wisdom) are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full” (Prov 8:18-21; See also Prov 3:13-18).
- This treasure (the kingdom of heaven) is opposed to earthly wealth: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt 6:19-21).
- This treasure is found in the LAW, the word of God:
  - “He said to them, ‘Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old’” (Mt 13:52).
  - The ordinances of the Lord: “They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb” (Ps 19:10).
- This wisdom is needed to teach and understand the righteousness, mercy, faithfulness, and grace of the kingdom of heaven.

❖ **“Hidden in a field.”**

- The image of a treasure hidden in a field was not unknown to the disciples. People hid their valuables in the ground, especially in times of danger.
- The kingdom of heaven is hidden:
  - for those who don’t believe – the crowds.
    - “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners.’” ’ But wisdom is proved right by her actions.” (Mt 11:18, 19).

- for the Pharisees, because they wanted a sign as proof.
- for the people of Nazareth, because they think that they know the family background of Jesus. “Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?’ they asked. ‘Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?’ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor” (Mt 13:54-57).
- The kingdom of heaven is revealed to:
  - “At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure” (Mt 11: 25, 26; compare 1 Cor 1:27-29).

❖ **“When a man found it, he hid it again”**

- It was by accident, that this man found the treasure. He was not searching for it. It was not his field. And, he could not claim the treasure as his, after he has found it. Before he can call the treasure his own, he needs to hide it again, so no one else can discover what he has found and by the field.
  - See also Matthew 25:25.

❖ **“And then in his joy went”**

- We can imagine his joy!
- Finding Christ, the wisdom and the truth, the new community of God, is accompanied with joy!
  - “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand” (Ps 16:11).
  - “The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes” (Ps 19:8).
  - Jesus said to his disciples: “But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (Mt 13: 16, 17).

❖ **“And sold all he had and bought that field.”**

- The owner of the field was not aware of the existence of this treasure, otherwise, he wouldn’t have sold the field to this man. The man needs to buy this field in order to

become the new owner of the field including the hidden treasure. Otherwise, he might have been accused of stealing the treasure from a field, which was not his own.

- The treasure has more value than all his previous possessions together.
- You need to give up everything you had.
- The same theme is found in the story of the young rich and in the Book of Proverbs:
  - “Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me’” (Mt 19:21). See also Luke 14:27, 33.
  - “Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding” (Prov 23:23).
  - “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding” (Prov 4:7).

#### Verse 45-46

❖ **“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant **looking for fine pearls.**”**

- The difference with the previous parable is, that this merchant is diligently looking for fine pearls. Seeking is an important aspect of the kingdom of heaven.
  - “But **seek** first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:33).
  - “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost” (Isa 55:1, 2).
- Compare:
  - “Do not give dogs what is sacred; **do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet,** and then turn and tear you to pieces” (Mt 7:6).
    - Someone who is throwing his pearls to pigs, doesn’t understand the precious value. He even despises the kingdom of God (= pearls).

❖ **“When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”**

- “‘Pearls’ were more valued by the ancients than they are by us, and several commentators have suggested that pearls once held the place that diamonds do now.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 2, p. 439).

- See for further explanation the previous parable.

## Application

### General

- ❖ Tell the two parables vividly and reflect on your own experience as preacher when and how you discovered the value, the greatness of the kingdom of heaven. Invite the people to make the same or other discoveries.
  - It is possible to tell about the options the man had after he has found the treasure. Luz writes: "Important is rather what the man now does. Here too the narrator can choose among various options. The man could, for example, have stolen the treasure secretly. Or he could have obeyed the law and have had his discovery announced in order to find out who the owner was. However, he covers it up again. That was clever, for nobody is to discover his find in the intervening time until the purchase of the field has been completed. Whether his action was legal or moral does not interest the narrator. Then he bought the field. Here too the narrator would have had other options. The man could have withdrawn his money from the bank, sold a part of his possessions, or borrowed money. He does none of those, but he 'sells everything he has.' This variation is not accidental, especially since it is repeated in the following parable. Everything is obviously pointed toward this goal. That is why the man must first find the treasure, and that is why he must cover it up again. The issue for the narrator is the 'deliberate risk' of the finder who gives up 'everything else in order to gain the Kingdom of Heaven.'"<sup>3</sup>

### 44-46

- ❖ The treasure and the pearl:
  - Finding Christ and his wisdom, and discovering the Gospel of Salvation, means finding life in all its fullness.
    - "With regard to his intention, there is also general agreement. The parable, by reference to a once-in-a-lifetime discovery, to an event one only dreams about, expresses the incomparable worth of the kingdom and the necessity to do all one can do to gain it. One gladly risks everything to take advantage of the unexpected opportunity presented by the presence of God's salvific kingdom with all its blessings."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Luz, U. (2001, p. 277-278).

<sup>4</sup> Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 2, p. 435).

- Describe the joy of the “kingdom of heaven.” Joy: because of salvation, the vision of Christ, the new life, forgiveness of sins.
- ❖ Hidden:
  - The great value of the kingdom of heaven is often hidden from the eyes of people. Reasons might be:
    - People are disappointed in the church and other Christians.
    - People are disappointed in life generally.
    - People are questioning the truth of the Bible through scientific or philosophical reasoning.
- ❖ Found:
  - Some people discover the kingdom of heaven by accident. It is a gift from God.
  - Other people are looking for the values of life.
    - It is important to acknowledge that some people are honestly looking for answers to life’s questions, for wisdom, for philosophies, for peace.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit:
  - **Pray for the Holy Spirit. He will show us all the richness of the Gospel.**
    - “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints” (Eph 5:17, 18).

Questions to be asked

- ❖ **“He who has ears, let him hear”** (Mt 13:43).
  - > Did you find the treasure in the field already?
  - > Did you find the pearl of great value already?
  - > Did you leave everything behind you for the sake of the Kingdom?
- ❖ **“Have you understood all these things?”** (Mt 13:51).
  - > Do you understand the meaning of the treasure?
  - > Do you understand the value of the pearl?
  - > Do you understand why you need to leave everything behind you for the sake of the Kingdom?

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