The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 25 August 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl

Matthew 13:44-46

Back in 2016, news agencies in France reported on an amazing thing that had recently happened to an unnamed citizen of the town of Evreux. According to a local newspaper named *La Dépêche*, a man in Evreux had recently inherited a house from a deceased relative; and as he began to poke around the house to see what his relative might have left behind, he "found screwed under a piece of furniture a tinplate box (with gold inside)."[1] Then, he found a box "with a few gold pieces carefully hidden."[2] As he continued to look around the house, he found treasure all over the place! The auctioneer, Nicolas Fierfort, admitted that when he first went to evaluate the house, he hadn't noticed any of these treasures; yet, they were there all along! Fierfort said that the treasure "was extremely well hidden – under furniture, under piles of linen, in the bathroom. Basically, it was stashed everywhere!"[3] In total, the treasure consisted of "5,000 [gold] pieces, 37 ingots, and two bars."[4] This stash weighed more than 200 pounds (about 100 kg); and after it was sold off at various venues in October and November of that year, the man walked away with €3.5 million![5] Fierfort found that all this treasure had been legally purchased in the 1950's and 60's; and thus, it all legally belonged to the man who had inherited the house![6]

Every now and then, we hear stories just like this one—stories of people who unknowingly purchased (or inherited) a property in which a great treasure was found hidden, and thereby came into possession of that treasure. But guess what? Jesus told a story with a scenario just like this one—except that in this story, the man who came into possession of the treasure knew *exactly* what he was looking for; and he purchased a piece of property for the *express purpose* of getting that treasure. As we study this parable this morning, we will discover what *God* considers as *His* "treasure," and what lengths He went to in order to get it! The title of this message is ***The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl.***

Read Matthew 13:44-46.

I. The hidden treasure in the field (v. 44)

In **verse 44,** we come to the fifth of the seven parables that Jesus called the "Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." As you know (if you have been here in recent weeks), these "Kingdom Mystery" parables illustrate truths about what will happen in the period of time between Christ's *first* coming to earth, and His *second* coming. In other words, these parables reveal what we can expect to see happening *right now,* during this church age in which we are living, as well as during the seven-year Tribulation period, just before Christ returns to earth.

Now, there is a reason why Jesus called these parables "mysteries." A **"mystery"** is a truth which, in the past, had been "hidden," but which is now being revealed: and that is exactly what these Kingdom Mystery parables do. To those who were seeking truth, these parables revealed truths *about the Kingdom* which, up to that point, had been hidden, and unknown.

Now, the Jewish people knew, from the prophecies of Scripture, that the Kingdom of Messiah was coming; and they were expecting it to come at any time. (And they were *right* to be looking for it.) However, what they *didn't* understand is that the Messiah would come to earth *two* times, with two very different missions. The first time He came for the purpose of dying on the cross for our sins, and rising again to conquer death for us; and the second time He will come to set up the Kingdom. We have no idea how long it will be before Christ returns to set up the Kingdom; but what we do know is that *for now*, the Kingdom has been set aside and postponed, because of Israel's national unbelief. God desires to set up that Kingdom that He promised to Israel; but He is waiting for Israel to repent, and turn to Him.

One day, after Israel, as a nation, finally *does* repent and believe on Jesus, the Kingdom *will* be established. In the meantime, God is gathering citizens for His Kingdom from every nation, kindred, and tribe; and during *this* age, He is doing this through the agency of His churches. As we preach the Gospel, and lead people to Christ, souls are being gathered into the *invisible, spiritual* **"Kingdom of God"** (which is made up of all people who are born again); and these same souls who are being brought into the Kingdom of God are *also* destined to be citizens of the *visible, physical* **"Kingdom of Heaven,"** which Christ will establish here on earth, after He returns. It is called "the Kingdom *of Heaven*" (even though it will be here on earth) because it will be of heavenly origin. King Jesus will come down *from heaven* to establish it!

With this in mind, let's look at the meaning of this parable. First, we see that there is a ***"man"*** who found a hidden treasure in a field; and after finding the treasure, and deciding to make this treasure his own, he buried it, and hid it there in the field, for the time being. He then went and *purchased* the field, so that he could come into possession of that treasure. Whom does this mysterious ***"man"*** represent? He represents none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Israel! What, then, does the ***"field"*** represent? The ***"field"*** represents *the world*; and the ***"treasure"*** that was hidden in the field represents *the nation of Israel.*

Folks, it should be no surprise that Christ would describe Israel as His ***"treasure."*** From ancient times, God has always called Israel ***"a peculiar <u>treasure</u> unto me above all people."***

Read Exodus 19:1-6.

Why has God chosen Israel as a ***"peculiar treasure"*** unto Himself? Is it because they are big and powerful, and therefore "Might makes right"? Not at all! In **Deuteronomy 7,** Moses assured Israel that ***"The LORD did <u>not</u> set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the <u>fewest</u> of all people."*** Did God choose them because they are *morally* superior to other nations? Not at all! In **Deuteronomy 9,** Moses told the people of Israel, ***"Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee <u>not</u> this good land*** [the land of Canaan] ***to possess it for <u>thy</u> righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people."*** Moses then went on to remind them of their repeated rebellion against God during their years of wandering in the wilderness; and he assured them that *their* righteousness had not in any way *earned* them the privilege of being Jehovah's people.

Why *did* God choose Israel, then? Moses said that it was ***"because the LORD <u>loved</u> you, and because he would keep the <u>oath</u> which he had sworn unto your fathers."*** It's that simple, folks! First, God *loved* Israel. For some reason beyond our comprehension, God *chooses* to love Israel, even though they are so rebellious (just as He loves *us,* even though *we* are so rebellious)! Secondly, God has chosen Israel as His ***"peculiar people"*** because He made an ***"oath"*** to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and as the ever-faithful God, He *will keep* His promise to protect Israel, and to own them as His people! However, God didn't make Israel His people simply by saying "You're mine now!" That wasn't enough. God had to *redeem* them, and *purchase* them for His own. You'll notice that the man in the parable *purchased* the field. He had to make a personal *sacrifice* in order to get the treasure in that field. What does this mean? It means that God had to make *a personal sacrifice* in order to purchase Israel as His people. He had to *ransom* them. Let's see what Isaiah said about this.

Read Isaiah 43:1-7.

In these verses, the LORD assures Israel that He has ***"redeemed"*** them. That word ***"redeemed"*** comes from the verb *ga'al,* which means "to redeem, buy back, or purchase." It is the word that was used when a man paid the debt of a brother or a near relative, so that he could "buy back" that inheritance for his brother, and keep it in the family. The man who bought back the inheritance was called the *goel*—the "kinsman redeemer." This was also the word that was used when a man married his brother's widow. By marrying his brother's widow, and purchasing his brother's property, he was "redeeming," or buying back, his brother's inheritance, so that he could bring up children in his brother's name, and keep the inheritance in his brother's name. He was called the *goel*—the "kinsman redeemer." Similarly, God has *redeemed* Israel, as a nation. He "bought them back," so that they might be His inheritance. We see this truth again in **verse 3,** where the Lord says, ***"I gave Egypt for thy <u>ransom</u>, Ethiopia and Seba for thee."*** That word ***"ransom"*** is translated from the word *copher*; and *copher* is a form of the verb *capher,* which means "to cover, or atone." This word *capher* usually signifies a covering, or atonement, that is made through the shedding of blood.

The idea here is that God brought death and destruction upon Egypt, so that Israel might be freed from slavery, and brought unto God as a people. Likewise, in the time of King Asa, King Zerah of Ethiopia came against Judah with an army of a ***"thousand thousand"*** (a million), with the intent of annihilating them; yet, God supernaturally destroyed this incredibly large army, and spared His people Israel. Once again, a *nation* (Ethiopia) was destroyed so that Israel might go free. God "ransomed" them.

Yet, is this the *ultimate* way that God "ransomed" Israel—by destroying another nation in their place? No! God *did* destroy the firstborn of Egypt, so that Pharaoh would finally allow Israel to go free; and in *that* sense, God gave Egypt for a ransom. However, Israel's *real* ransom had to come from the blood of a *sinless* one. Sin separates sinners from God; and therefore, Israel needed to be bought back from their sin, and reconciled to God. The **spotless lambs** that God commanded Israel to slay and eat on that first Passover night were a picture of the *true* Lamb of God, Jesus Christ; and **the *blood* of those lambs**, which the children of Israel put on the doorposts of their houses, so that the LORD would not slay their firstborn, pictured Jesus' precious blood, which He would one day shed on the cross to redeem Israel. When Jesus began His public ministry, John the Baptist pointed to Him and said, ***"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*** My friends, Jesus shed His blood to cover Israel's sin! The mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant—that place where the blood of bulls and goats was sprinkled—was called the *capporeth* (the "place of covering"). The sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat, which took place one time per year, on *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement, or Covering), is a picture of Jesus' precious blood, which not only *covers*, but *takes away* Israel's sins, so that God might accept them.

Think back to this parable of the hidden treasure. What did the man who found the treasure do in order that he might *possess* that treasure? He made a tremendous personal sacrifice! He went and *sold all that he had*, just so that he might buy that field, and possess the treasure that was hidden in it. In the same way, Jesus gave *everything that He had* (His own precious life's blood) so that He might purchase the "field" of mankind, and thus also purchase His peculiar treasure, Israel, which was hidden in the field. As Jesus shed His blood on the cross, and paid for the sins of Israel, He *also* paid for the sins of *all nations.* Our redemption was purchased not through the shedding of animal blood, or through the payment of gold or silver, but with the priceless blood of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19.

This parable of the hidden treasure is a beautiful picture of God's peculiar love for Israel. Though the Jewish people are in no way superior to the Gentiles, God has loved them with an everlasting love, because they are the descendants of His friend, Abraham. Though the greater

part of the Jewish people are still ***"enemies"*** of the Gospel, and are still refusing to believe on Jesus as their Messiah, they are still beloved by God for the sake of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Christ has already "sold all that He had" on the cross, and has thus *purchased* Israel nationally; but one day, when He returns to earth and sets up His Kingdom, He will "uncover" His hidden treasure, Israel, and proudly display her to the world during the 1,000-year Kingdom age. Through the fiery judgment of the Tribulation period, great multitudes of Jewish people will believe on Yeshua; and after those seven horrible years, when Christ establishes His Kingdom on Mount Zion, every Jew entering the 1,000-year Kingdom will be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! Literally ***"<u>all</u> Israel shall be saved."***

Read Romans 11:25-28.

Israel is God's peculiar treasure. In what sense, though, is God's treasure ***"hidden"*** in the ***"field"*** of the world? Israel is "hidden" in that that she has been *scattered* throughout the nations by wars and persecution; and during the long centuries of Israel's exile, her special position as *God's Covenant people* has not been seen or recognised by most Gentile people. The scattering began in **722 B.C**., when the Assyrian Empire destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel (the ten northern tribes), and took the Jews out of their land, into captivity. Then, in **586 B.C**., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed the Kingdom of Judah (the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin); and the people were scattered all over the Middle East and Egypt. Now, in **535 B.C.,** God gave Israel a merciful reprieve. God put it into the heart of King Cyrus to allow the Jews in Persia to go back to their land; and a small number of Jews did return to the land, and became established once again. However, in A.D. 70, God allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. Since then, Israel has been scattered to every corner of the world; and the Jews have been the curse and offscouring of every nation. God has allowed them to be cruelly persecuted by their enemies. Why had He done this? To chastise them for their national crime of rejecting and crucifying their own Messiah.

Yet, God is not done with Israel. According to **Zechariah 2:8,** Israel is the ***"apple"*** of God's eye; and they always will be. God is still seeking after Israel, like a shepherd who seeks his scattered sheep on the mountains; and one day, when Jesus, the son of David, returns to set up His Kingdom, He *will* restore the Jewish people to their land, in a state of *national repentance and faith* in Him. *Every* Jew entering the Kingdom will be a believer in Jesus!

Read Ezekiel 34:11-16, 22-31.

What is this ***"covenant of peace"*** that God mentioned in **verse 25**? It is the *New Covenant*— the covenant that God promised that He would one day make with Israel. In **Jeremiah 31** God said, ***"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a <u>new</u> covenant with the house***

of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts …for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The New Covenant includes the ***spiritual*** **promise of forgiveness of sins**, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. (All who believe on Jesus are *already* enjoying this part of the New Covenant.) However, there is another promise in the New Covenant, which applies *only* to Israel. The New Covenant also includes the ***physical*** **promise** that the Jews will be regathered to their land, and dwell there in safety, under the personal rule of the Messiah. This New Covenant was ratified by Christ's blood, when He died on the cross. Yet, the fact that Jesus died for the *nation* of Israel does not mean that *every individual Jew* is saved. Each individual Jew is *personally* responsible to repent of his sins, and place his trust in Jesus. This is why Jesus *personally sought after* sinners, and called them to repentance. For instance, Jesus once sought out a lying, cheating tax-collector named Zachaeus, and basically invited Himself to Zachaeus's house for dinner! While they were sitting at dinner that afternoon, a wonderful thing happened: Zachaeus believed on Jesus, repented of his sin, and was *saved!* As Jesus spoke with Zachaeus, He quoted from **Ezekiel 34,** and applied the "Good Shepherd" analogy to Himself, as He said, ***"This day is <u>salvation</u> come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to <u>seek</u> and to <u>save</u> that which was lost."***

To my knowledge, none of us here this morning is of Jewish stock; but the same that was true of Zachaeus is true of all of us. Jesus came to seek after the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but there are *other* sheep that He came to seek after, as well, who are *not* of the house of Israel. This brings me to our second point this morning, and to our sixth "Kingdom Mystery" parable.

II. The pearl of great price (vv. 45-46)

(Read Matthew 13:45-46 again.) In the parable of the treasure in the field, we saw that the "hidden treasure" represents the nation of Israel. During this present age, Israel remains "hidden," in that she is scattered throughout the world, and "hidden" among many nations. Even as we speak, more and more Jewish people are being gathered *back* to the land of Israel, just as God said would happen in the last days: yet, for now, Israel is still largely "hidden" among the nations. Where, then, do *Gentile* believers fit into the "Mysteries of the Kingdom"? That is what the parable of the ***"pearl of great price"*** reveals!

Now, even in the parable of the treasure in the field, the Gentiles were represented. The "hidden treasure" represents Israel; but we mustn't forget that the ***"field"*** represents "the world" (*all* nations). Just as the man in that parable sold all that he had in order to purchase

the field, so Jesus shed His precious blood to pay for the sins of the *whole world.* The Bible says, ***"For God so loved the <u>world</u>, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."***

Yet, the fact that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world does not mean that all men will be saved, and end up in Heaven. Every soul (whether Jew or Gentile) must *personally repent* of his sins, and believe on Jesus, to receive the gift of eternal life that Christ purchased for us. That is what this ***"pearl of great price"*** represents—those who have received the gift of salvation by faith, and have been birthed into the Kingdom of God. *All* people, whether Jew or Gentile, who believe on Jesus, are in the Kingdom of God. Yet, over the past 2,000 years, the overwhelming majority of those who have been birthed into the Kingdom of God have been *Gentiles*; and thus, this "pearl of great price" especially represents *Gentile* believers.

Who, then, is the ***"merchant man"*** who *bought* this pearl? It is, once again, the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ sold all that He had (in other words, He shed His priceless blood), in order to purchase us unto Himself as a holy and peculiar people. Israel, as a nation, is called a "holy people"; but all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are, likewise, called "a holy people."

Read 1 Peter 2:1-10.

Now, let's dive deeper into this "pearl" metaphor. First of all, where are "pearls" formed? They are formed in the inner organs of oysters, which live in **the sea**; and oftentimes in Scripture, the sea is a picture of **all the nations of the earth.** For example, in **Revelation 17:15,** God told John that the sea on which the apostate harlot woman was sitting represents ***"peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."*** What does this mean, then? It means that God is calling a people unto Himself from all peoples and nations! Yet, not everyone chooses to heed the call to salvation. That is why the ***"pearl"*** represents those, from among all nations, who *repent* of their sin, and *believe* on Jesus Christ.

But that's not all. There is more to this analogy! Remember, a pearl is formed by a living organism. A pearl is formed inside a living oyster, by the process of accretion (the "adding on" of layer after layer of secretions, to cover a piece of sand, or some other little irritant). Likewise, each local church is formed by the Living One, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, as He takes many different kinds of people, and adds them to the church, and makes them "one." Just as a pearl is many layers of secretions, yet *one* entity, so every local church (which is made up of saved and baptised believers) is ***"one body."*** In **Galatians 3,** Paul says, ***"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*** In other words, receiving baptism is like putting on a uniform, which *publicly* identifies you as a believer, and as a member of Christ's body, the church. Paul then goes on

to say, "***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."***

There are many nations represented here today; but we who have placed our faith in Jesus are all one ***"in Christ,"*** within the Kingdom of God. Also, those of us who are saved *and* biblically baptised are members of ***"one body,"*** which is called ***"the church."*** Redemption Baptist Church is small and insignificant in the *world's* eyes; but not in God's eyes. Christ came down from Heaven and gave Himself for this church (and for *every* Bible-believing church), so that He might sanctify it to Himself as His holy bride!

Read Ephesians 4:1-6 and 5:21-33.

At this point, I would stress that a **"church"** is a *local, visible* body of saved *and baptised* believers; and it is *not* the same thing as "the Kingdom of God"! If you are saved, then you have been a member of the Kingdom of God since the moment you were saved; but that doesn't make you a member of a local church. Every saved person *should* join a local church by receiving baptism; but the reality is that not all people in the Kingdom of God *have* been baptised into a church. (The thief on the cross didn't even *get* the chance to be baptised, because he died shortly after he believed on Christ!) The **"church of God"** is visible, and local, and is made up of saved *and baptised* believers; but the **"<u>Kingdom</u> of God"** is invisible, and universal; and it is made up of *all who are born again.*

What, then, is the **"Kingdom of Heaven"**? Is it the same as the "Kingdom of God"? No. Every member of the Kingdom of God *will also* be a member of the Kingdom of Heaven one day; yet, the "Kingdom of God" and the "Kingdom of Heaven" are distinct. The **Kingdom of God** is spiritual, and invisible; but the **Kingdom of Heaven** will be *physical* and *visible*: and it will be for 1,000-years, right here on earth. The Kingdom of Heaven has not arrived yet; but it *will* arrive after Christ comes down from Heaven to establish it. In the meantime, during this church age, we who believe on Christ (whether we be Jew or Gentile) are counted as "children of the Kingdom of Heaven." The Kingdom of Heaven is prepared for believing *Israel*; but we Gentiles who believe on Jesus will be part of that Kingdom, too. Someday, after Christ returns to earth, we who are saved *will* enter into the Kingdom; and we will rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years!

Read Revelation 20:1-6.

Conclusion: The Bible says that ***"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."*** Jesus will one day appear in the

clouds, and receive all believers of this church age to Himself, to be with Him in His Father's house in Heaven. (This event is called "the Rapture," or "catching up.") Jesus said, ***"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*** For seven years after the Rapture, while the Tribulation is in progress down on earth, we will be with Christ in the glories of Heaven; but then, after the Tribulation, Christ will descend to earth, destroy the armies of the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon, and set up His Kingdom; and we will come with Him, to rule and reign with Him. To all who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus will then say these wonderful words: ***"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*** All these things are in store for those who love Christ! However, not everyone will hear these words, ***"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."*** *Only the saved* will hear these words. My friend, if you are not sure whether you are saved, please realise that Jesus is the only one who can forgive your sins. Jesus said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me***." In simple faith, ask Jesus to forgive you of all your sins, and to be your Lord and Saviour; and He will make you a member of the Kingdom of God, *and* of the future Kingdom of Heaven.

To those who are saved, I would end this message with words of comfort. Jesus said, ***"Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."*** Jesus is coming back, Christian! No matter what trial you may be going through, you may rest in the assurance that you are bought with a price, and that you belong to Jesus; and nothing can sever you from Him. We are like a pearl or great price to the Lord; and He *will* come back to receive us to Himself! However, I would also challenge you with the question: Are you serving Him with all your might, from a heart of love? Or would you be ashamed to stand before Him if He were to return today? If so, confess your sin, and get right with Him today!

[1] Henry Samuel, "French man discovers gold bars worth €3.5m after inheriting home," *The Telegraph,* https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/11/22/french-man-discovers-gold-bars-worth-35m-inheriting-home/

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] E. Reid Ross, "6 Priceless Treasures Everybody Dismissed As Worthless Junk," cited in *Cracked*, July 3, 2019, https://www.cracked.com/article_26515_6-priceless-treasures-everybody-dismissed-as-worthless-junk.html

[5] Henry Samuel, "French man discovers gold bars worth €3.5m after inheriting home."

[6] *Ibid.*