

Mt 13:44-46 (ESV)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you through God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Throughout the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, Christ our Lord methodically describes through parables how God rules his kingdom of grace. Jesus prepared these teachings so that those within the community of believers might be well instructed on the kingdom of heaven. In prior parables, our Lord describes the process of his kingdom's growth: a reckless sowing of God's Word so that many believers can spring from the earth. Our Lord also described his kingdom as expansive and quickly growing; as big of a transformation as a tiny mustard seed growing into a large tree. Now, Christ Jesus, in our two parables for today, lays out the very foundation of the kingdom: how he established the kingdom and who makes up this kingdom.

Here again the two parables: **“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. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”**

There are two things: the people of the kingdom and the guarantor of the kingdom. The people of the kingdom are the valuable items, the things worth seeking after, the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value. The guarantor of the kingdom is the shrewd treasure hunter and the shrewd merchant who make sure to acquire the valuable item. Both parables are teaching this great mystery: Christ Jesus' love in giving up everything to find that which he values, you his beloved.

The treasures worth seeking are you Christ's people. The treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great value, these are meant to mark mankind as something worthwhile to God. Our Lord meant to use these examples to guarantee for you his love for all men. No one is surprised by a treasure hunter looking for the greatest of prizes. No one is surprised by a jeweler seeking to find the finest of pearls. Should we be surprised by the Lord Jesus seeking the desires of his heart, the human race?

What gives the treasure and the pearl its special value? Why does God care about mankind? It is not because man did anything special. Man actually made himself worthless through his active rebellion and transgressions against God. Yes, God should have thought of this treasure as fool's gold and of this pearl as a big fake. Yet, our Lord Jesus disregards that. He loves the unlovable. He finds value and precious things out of trash. He gives you the title of treasure and the title of a great valuable pearl, a beautiful

adornment, something worthy to cherish. God gives man the value. God gives himself the reason for starting to hunt for treasure.

These two parables have something more to say than of the impressive treasure and trophies Christ has found. It also speaks of his impressive actions to acquire these items. Across both stories, the treasure hunter is very shrewd once he has found his treasure. Both times he sells all that which he has for the treasure. He did everything he could to acquire what he was looking for. Christ Jesus shows his love by valuing you, and he values you by the very actions he takes. He valued you by taking the effort to find you, he valued you by giving up everything he had, and he valued you by doing everything necessary to acquire you.

Just as the treasure hunter went digging in different fields for treasure, just as the merchant searched for the right pearl, so Christ Jesus went looking for you. He made all the effort, he did the work. You were lying there hidden in the field. You were the pearl concealed. Yet, Christ Jesus did not tire of finishing the search. He traveled the greatest distance: stepping out of his throne to become a man. No effort or work was spared to make sure he could find you.

It's not just that our Lord found you, he also took the care to do everything possible to secure you. The way that this is described by the parable is that our Lord sold everything which he had, and bought the treasure. It says in both parables, "**he went and sold all that he had.**" What does it look like that Christ sold all that he had? Elsewhere St. Paul describes this Jesus as one "**who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant.**" Our Lord did not grasp onto, did not hold onto his majesty for his advantage, but put it into service of others. He did not concern himself with his own care, but with the care of others. He sold everything! He gave the most precious thing, his life, the life of the living God, to seize the treasure. He showed that you were more valuable than himself! Oh, what immeasurable love! Dear Christian, see what great love Jesus has for you, as he gave up everything to make sure you were part of his kingdom.

Knowing this, you have confidence to live your life in Christ's kingdom; knowing that you are Christ's treasure. We have a beautiful example of this confidence in our commemoration for this Advent mid-week, St. Lucia. She is a martyr, a hero of the faith. She indeed died to confess Jesus as her own. And what is exemplar about St. Lucia, and so many of the Christians that have gone before us, is how much she treasured her residence in the kingdom of heaven. Nothing was more valuable to her than being the pearl Christ was willing to die for. She and her mother were devout Christians who saw the power of Christ's healing, especially when Lucia's mother found a miraculous return to health. Inspired by such care of her mother, Lucia wanted to dedicate her life to Christ, even if that meant rejection by the world. She would rather give up her expensive dowry to give to the poor, than enjoy earthly riches. Of course this choice did not make her betrothed happy. He sought to punish Lucia by turning her over to the authorities as

a Christian, which was then still an offense punishable by death. Thus, Lucia died, publicly professing herself a Christian, even when begged by the authorities to give up such foolishness.

St. Lucia could die confident that her Lord Jesus had treasured her. She could die knowing that he did not think his own majesty was worth holding onto as long as the prize of his heart, the human race, was not guaranteed to be his. This is your confidence. This is your shrewdness with regards to the things of this world. Even if you are never required to, Lord willing, be killed for confessing Christ, you stand within the same kingdom as the faithful servant Lucia. You stand within the same guarantee of salvation, the precious blood of the Lamb of God.

We have learned throughout this Advent what it means to be faithful servants to the coming King, the Lord Jesus. We have learned concerning the apostle Andrew, who boldly confessed Jesus as the Christ, inviting first his own brother Simon Peter, and then men throughout the world to believe on the Lord for the forgiveness of their sins. We have learned concerning the bishop and doctor Ambrose, whose knowledge and mastery of God's Word was able to clearly teach the faithful concerning the Savior of the Nations. And today we have seen the wonderful example of St. Lucia, who could never lose the treasure of knowing how much her Lord treasured her, to the point of even facing death for it. These are your brothers and sisters in Christ, whose testimony point to a majestic and powerful kingdom, ruled by a benevolent and caring King. A king unafraid to even stoop down towards a lowly manger and unafraid to take on poverty for others to become rich. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.