

Old and New Treasures

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Ninth Sunday after Pentecost) is Matthew 13:44-52. This text includes four parables: The hidden treasure; the pearl of great value, the net and new and old treasures.

Jesus told these last parables, found only in Matthew, to His disciples. The first two parables teach the same truth: The kingdom is of such great value that one should be willing to give up all he has in order to gain it. Jesus did not imply that one can purchase the kingdom with money or good deeds.

The message and the impact of the Hidden Treasure and the Mustard Seed can be the same for the disciples of Jesus today. Those parables bring an image and a message of assurance and comfort. The man/merchant did whatever it took in order to possess what he valued so highly, even to the point of selling everything he had. So has Jesus done what needed to be done to possess His holy Christian church on earth today. Though we disciples may often feel buried under the challenges and dangers presented by our own sinful flesh, by the hostile world around us, and by the great enemy and father of lies, there need be no doubt that we belong to Jesus. We have been acquired. Christ has purchased us at the price of everything that He had. In the breathtaking reckoning of grace, we are as a treasure to him. Secure in that confidence, we can continue to follow Him.

In the Dragnet, however, Jesus' teaching imparts strength to carry out the mission mandate that the Master has given in the first place to the Twelve (chapter 10) and in general terms to all disciples (5:13-16). The image of the net gathering in sea creatures of every kind inevitably evokes the original call of Jesus: "come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men" (4:18-22). The mission must and will go on, through Jesus' words and deeds and those of His disciples after Him, calling people to salvation and discipleship. All kinds of sea creatures will be gathered into the visible community, both good and rotten, but what of that? The angels will sort it out on the great day. Jesus' disciples only are not to lose heart, and to carry on as they follow Him in His outreach to Israel and ultimately to all nations (28:18-20).

The disciple who understands these things, then will have a treasure-store of wisdom and truth that comes from the Christ, who fulfills the OT Scriptures, and therefore from those Scriptures as well. For us that is a great blessing that has been and continues to be given us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ thank for the giving of yourself into death that I might be brought into your kingdom by great mercy and grace. Keep me steadfast in your Word, and lead me out of death to life. Amen. (TLSB)