

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost (A) 7/26/20 youtube link:  
TEXT: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

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In Tennyson's tale of the Holy Grail  
a KNIGHT goes on a QUEST...a "*TREASURE HUNT*".

He searches high and low  
for something which LASTS for ETERNITY  
and gives ultimate MEANING.

1.) He comes upon a SINGING BROOK  
with deep meadows and wonderful fruit trees beside it.

But as he EATS the fruit...it turns to DUST!

2.) Riding on...he sees a HOUSE  
--its opened door is a promised WELCOME.

And in the doorway there is a beautiful WOMAN  
--her eyes innocent and kind

The knight thinks:  
*"Surely the love of a woman and the sweet shelter of home  
are my heart's desire."*

But when he TOUCHES her...the woman...too...falls into DUST  
--and the HOUSE becomes no better than a broken down SHED.

3.) His soul still CRAVING...he travels ON.

And he finds a WARRIOR clad in golden armor.

*"How WONDERFUL...how MARVELOUS!"* ...the knight says.

But when he reaches out to EMBRACE the golden warrior  
--the warrior ALSO turns to DUST.

4.) Then...in the distance...the knight sees a CITY shining on a HILL.

*“Surely the CITY and the affection of other PEOPLE  
will mean my journey’s END!”...he cries out!*

But when he reaches the CREST of the hill  
--there is neither CITY...nor any PEOPLE...nor any VOICE at ALL!

And the knight cries out in FRUSTRATION and GRIEF...  
*“If in my QUEST...I ever FIND the Holy Grail...and TOUCH it...  
--IT will crumble into DUST!”*

(pause)

TREASURE!

Valuable FINDS!

SOMETHING that will NOT crumble into DUST  
--but will LAST for ETERNITY and give ultimate MEANING!

What IS it?  
And WHERE do we FIND it?  
(pause)

Well...in today’s GOSPEL...Jesus IDENTIFIES it!

**It’s the “Kingdom of Heaven”...the “Kingdom of God”!**

And he tells us a lot ABOUT it!

**I.) FIRST...Jesus tells us that it is very...VERY...VALUABLE!  
A.] God’s Kingdom IS a veritable TREASURE!**

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Of it...Methodist pastor JOHN WESLEY wrote:  
*“The Kingdom of God within us is a treasure indeed.  
But it’s a treasure hid from the world  
and from the most wise and prudent people in it.  
He who finds this treasure  
(perhaps when he thought it far from him)  
hides it deep in his heart, and gives up all other happiness for it.”*

In saying “he” there...I’m sure Wesley included all “SHEs” as well!

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In Faith Breaks...J. HOWARD OLDS asks:  
*“Are you tired of chasing pretty rainbows?  
Are you tired of spinning round and round?”*

And in ANSWER to his own questions...Olds ADVISES:  
*“Gather up all the broken dreams of your life  
and at the feet of Jesus...lay them down.  
Find the Pearl of Great Price.”*

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**B.] Using 3 “Sermon Illustrations”... “Parables”...  
Jesus DESCRIBES the Kingdom of God.**

**1.) As a MUSTARD SEED.**

Now...THIS is INTERESTING!  
A MUSTARD SEED?

I wouldn’t think of a MUSTARD seed as being THAT valuable!

True...I DO like mustard on my Hamburger and Hot Dog.

But...C’mon!

I don't SEE how it can be THAT valuable!



(pause)

But LISTEN:

In Mustard Seed...JERRY GOEBEL tells us:

*"From the smallest seed grows a shrub as large as a tree.*

*It is not just tall...but is also wide.*

*It was known as the 'poor man's fence'  
providing shade and protection at no cost.*

*It kept predators out...and children in.*

*The mustard plant was thick...providing nests for birds  
who brightened the yard with music and color  
while keeping the insect population under control.*

*Comfort...protection...and safety for the family.*

*Available to the poorest of the poor  
--a reward far greater than the investment."*

THAT's why the MUSTARD seed  
was so VALUABLE in Jesus' day!

(pause)

## **2.) Jesus DESCRIBES the Kingdom of God**

**...as a valuable TREASURE.**

--which ONE man HID in a field

--and which ANOTHER man DISCOVERED

...and then sold everything he had to buy that field and get!

(pause)

## **3.) Jesus DESCRIBES the Kingdom of God**

**...as a most valuable PEARL.**

--which is MORE valuable than all OTHER pearls

--an which a pearl merchant...like the field-treasure-finder...

...sold everything HE had to buy!

Yes,...through these 3 “Sermon Illustrations”... “Parables”...  
Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God  
is very...VERY...VALUABLE!

It’s a veritable TREASURE!

It’s something that will NOT crumble into DUST!

It will LAST for ETERNITY... and give ultimate MEANING!

In all of today’s Gospel parables...Jesus clearly tells us  
that the Kingdom of God  
is WORTH giving up EVERYTHING ELSE for!  
(pause)

**II.) HOWEVER...Jesus ALSO tells us...  
...that we’ll have to SEARCH for it!**

All of today’s Gospel parables  
imply that the Kingdom of God is NOT readily VISIBLE.

The kingdom MUST be carefully SOUGHT OUT!  
(pause)

**A.] The MUSTARD seed ...is SMALLER than other seeds.**

It’s MICROSCOPIC!

The mustard seed can get STUCK under the TIP of a FINGERNAIL!

It’s SO small...that you could GRASP it in the PALM of your hand...  
...and not feel it!

If you want to see a MUSTARD seed  
...you’ll HAVE to look HARD for it!  
(pause)

**B.] A man finds a TREASURE...HIDDEN in a field.**

It was NOT in plain sight  
for everyone passing by to see.

It was HIDDEN in the field to keep it SAFE.

When originally BURIED there  
--it was NOT really meant to be DISCOVERED  
--and it would take some SEARCHING to find it again!  
(pause)

**C.] And a merchant SEEKS a valuable PEARL.**

Fine pearls...REALLY fine pearls  
--are ALSO not easily VISIBLE!  
--NOT frequently FOUND!

A pearl merchant was CONSTANTLY “*on the lookout*” for them.

That constant “*SEARCH and DISCOVERY*” mission  
...was an accepted and ever-present PART of his PROFESSION.  
(pause)

Yes...Jesus was RIGHT!

Still...even TODAY...the Kingdom of God is NOT readily VISIBLE.

If it's going to be FOUND  
...it MUST be carefully SOUGHT OUT!  
(pause)

**III.) But THAT's what we HAVE to DO  
if we're going to REAP the kingdom's REWARDS!**

I like what Rev. Dr. WILL WILLIMON says in Go for the Gold.  
He writes:

*"As a kid, my favorite book was Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island.  
I read Treasure Island a dozen times.*

*Of course, I identified with Jim...the KID in the story.*

*But thinking back, I really loved the ADULTS in Treasure Island  
because I didn't know any adults  
like the ones who peopled Treasure Island*

*Stevenson's adults were grownups  
who staked all...risked everything...  
--for nothing more than some map scrawled on a piece of paper.*

*The adults I knew stayed home...  
...kept their heads down...went to work in the morning...  
...and then they came back again in the evening.*

*But in Treasure Island...they risked...they lied if needed...  
...and they had great lives and exciting deaths."*

Willimon CONTINUES:

*"There is this relentless...virtually irresistible tendency of life...  
to transmute from adventure into tame predictability.*

*One day you're an angry...YOUNG thing...  
--ready to grab the world by the tail and twist  
--dying to set the woods on fire.*

*And the next day you're some OLD guy...  
--slouched in an easy chair  
-- complaining about how the kids are ruining the world.*

*One day you're a KID*

*--excited about the prospect of leaving home*

*--abandoning your parents*

*--and going to college where you can think as you like,  
and they can't do anything about it.*

*And then the next day you're just a COLLEGE STUDENT*

*--going through the motions*

*--trying to accumulate enough hours to graduate.”*

Willimon CONCLUDES:

***“Jesus says a kingdom BELONGS***

***to those with the guts to stake it all on the treasure!”***

Having the GUTS to STAKE it ALL on the TREASURE!

I LOVE it!



And that's what WE have to DO

if we're going to REAP God's Kingdom's REWARDS!

**(pause)**

**IV.) O.K...Like Tennyson's KNIGHT in our opening story**

**--WE are SEEKING!**

**--WE are SEARCHING!**

**--We WANT to FIND the “Kingdom of God”!**

SO...HOW and WHERE do we FIND it?

Well...God's Kingdom is all over our world.

That's because God is ALIVE and ACTIVE...all over our world.

So we should NOT have to go TOO far  
to FIND God's Kingdom!

Right?...RIGHT!



But guess what?

The church ...is the Kingdom!

OUR church...is the Kingdom!

(pause)

God's Kingdom is 2-fold = "*Already*" and "*Not Yet*".

The "*Not Yet*" part? = That's God's ETERNAL kingdom

--in HEAVEN!

--where we'll GO to LIVE when we DIE

--where we'll be with God forever!

And the "*Already*" part? = That's HERE and NOW

--in our EARTHLY world and our community

--where we live NOW

--where God's Holy Spirit and CHURCH are!

WE are members of BOTH parts of God's Kingdom...right now!

We LIVE in the "*Already*"

...as members of our Lord's earthly CHURCH

--while we look FORWARD to LIVING in the "*Not Yet*"

...as members of our Lord's CHURCH TRIUMPHANT!

(pause)

God's CHURCH and MISSION

started OUT like the MUSTARD seed

...with just one "Pastor" and 12 "Disciple" members.

But it QUICKLY started yielding FRUIT

--and has GROWN into a GIGANTIC plant

...that has covered the whole WORLD...for CENTURIES!

God has USED his church POWERFULLY  
all over the WORLD...for CENTURES!

What an AWESOME...VALUABLE...TREASURE...  
the church HAS been...and still IS!

(pause)

OK.

Right NOW

...with COVID-19 raging amidst the discord and divisions among people  
in the world and our own country and community...

...and with our churches NOT physically GATHERING...  
--it may SEEM that the church is not surviving  
...much less growing!

But Jesus' parables are JUST as RELEVANT today!

And THROUGH them he is TELLING us...that the OPPOSITE is true!

The church IS thriving and growing!

But it's DOING so

--in ways we don't EXPECT

--and in ways may not SEE right now with everything else going on!

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If you wanna SEE how God's CHURCH is working

--go BACK and READ some of the "*God Sighting STORIES*"  
that Sherry has been putting in our NEWSLETTERS  
for the last 3 months!

They're POWERFUL!

They're AWESOME!

But they're not SHERRY's stories...not ALL of 'em...anyway! ☺

They're YOUR stories!...OUR stories!

YOU are SHOWING each other...and ALL of us...  
what God's been UP to lately  
--in SPITE of the Covid Critter!  
--in SPITE of the DISCORD and DIVISIONS!  
--in SPITE of everything that Satan has been throwing at us!

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Yes...times are TOUGH and DIFFERENT right now.

And it may SEEM like God is somehow “*STUCK at HOME in HEAVEN*”  
and is trying to AVOID all of the SICKNESS and CHAOS down here.

I couldn't BLAME him if he WAS! 😊

But make NO mistake ABOUT it!

God STILL is ALIVE and ACTIVE  
...HARD at WORK!  
...all over our WORLD!  
...for SURE in our COMMUNITY!  
...and DEFINITELY in and through his CHURCH!  
**(PAUSE)**

Today Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God  
is very...VERY...VALUABLE!

It's a veritable TREASURE!

It's something that will NOT crumble into DUST!

It will LAST for ETERNITY... and give ultimate MEANING!

It is WORTH giving up EVERYTHING ELSE for!  
(pause)

HOWEVER...the Kingdom of God is NOT readily VISIBLE.

If it's GOING to be FOUND...it's GONNA take a QUEST...  
...it MUST be carefully SOUGHT OUT!

The TREASURES of God's Kingdom will ONLY be OBTAINED  
by *"those with the guts to stake it all... on the treasure!"*

And that's what WE have to DO  
if we're going to REAP God's Kingdom's REWARDS!  
(pause)

Unfortunately...MANY people in the world  
will NEVER understand this!

And MANY people ARE...LOOKING!

But they don't know WHERE to look...or HOW to look.

And they don't REALIZE that it takes  
the MIND and EYES of the Holy Spirit...to SEE it!  
(pause)

SO... you know that THAT means?

- \* If they're gonna SEE it...
- \* If they're gonna FIND it...
- \* If other people are gonna get their hands on God's TREASURE...  
--YOU're gonna have to HELP them!



Now...how's THAT for a *"TREASURE HUNT"*?!

YOU help them FIND Jesus and God's Kingdom...  
...and EVERYBODY wins and reaps heavenly rewards!

**PRICELESS!**

T.B.T.G.

**AMEN!**