

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
26/07/2020
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Genesis 29: 15-28	Jacob's marries Leah and Rachel
Psalms 105: 1-11	Give thanks to the Lord, He is wonderful
Romans 8: 26-39	We are more than Conquerers, because of Jesus
Matthew 13: 44-58	Jesus tells Kingdom parables Jesus is rejected in Nazareth

Introduction

Is Jesus your greatest treasure? Today I would like to pose that question, and help us to think about how we would answer it. So let us look at the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl, and look at what they tell us about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another Story of a Treasure

As I was preparing for this Sunday, I came across another story, also talking about treasure and I'd like to begin by sharing it with you.

It is a story of an Indian monk who found the world's largest diamond. In a nearby village a man had a dream that if he went to a certain monastery he could gain enormous wealth beyond all his hopes. The villager arrived at the monastery and told the monk his dream. The monk explained, "the dream probably refers to this," and he handed over the diamond to him. The villager returned home with great joy, but that night tossed and turned. The next week he returned to the monastery utterly exhausted and begged, "Give me the wealth that enables you to give away this diamond so easily."

In one sense this story is the opposite to the parables, but in another sense it is the same. It challenges us to think about where true meaning and purpose are to be found in our lives. The monk had obviously found a treasure beyond the physical, he didn't need the diamond to be content. The man who had the dream and received the diamond had obviously been given physical wealth beyond what he needed, and yet he still sensed that there was more to life. That is what Jesus is talking about in the parables today, and that is what the first followers of Jesus

found, as they followed Jesus. They found meaning, they found purpose, and they were given a glimpse of what it is, to really live.

The Parables of Hidden Treasure and Pearl

Last week we looked how the “Kingdom of Heaven” could be seen as the “Rule of God” in our lives.

Let’s now look specifically at the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl. These parables both portray the Kingdom of Heaven as the most valuable thing we can possess. Both the man who found the hidden treasure and the merchant who found the fine pearl, were willing to give up everything else they owned so that they could be assured of possessing their find.

It’s interesting to see that there wasn’t a sense of begrudgingly having to part with all their other possessions. Specifically the man who found the treasure in the field, joyfully sold everything else just to get the field.

Likewise we should not let anything in our lives stop us from following Jesus. We should not let anything stop us from taking our place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christianity is often caricatured as taking us away from what we want. Those who can’t do this or that. Those who have to keep to strict rules. Those who have to say no to fun. The famous singer Robbie Williams obviously thought that, when he sang this line in a song “Oh Lord, make me pure, but not yet.”

Do we think of Jesus in this way?

To seek after the Kingdom of Heaven, to seek after Jesus, is to seek our greatest Good.

American Evangelical Preacher, John Piper, looks at it very differently to Robbie Williams in his book Book – “The Dangerous Duty of Delight”, he uses these words – “God is most Glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him.”

Sometimes when we are close to things, we can take them for granted or not realize their significance. The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) brought this home to me a number of years ago. At a previous place where I ministered there were 2 congregations, and parishioners were asked the question :-

“How important is God in Your Life?”

And they had 4 options to choose from:-

1. God Does not matter to me at all
2. Fairly important, but many other things are more important
3. God is more important to me than almost anything else
4. God is the most important reality in my life

As I looked at the question I thought answer 4 was a “no brainer” for Christians.

I was glad no one picked 1, but I was surprised at the number of people who picked 2 or 3. Sadly when the responses came back only 45% of one congregation picked 4, and for the other congregation only 10% picked 4.

I encourage you to take a hold of all that God has done for you in the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, and not to loose sight of it's significance. I believe it is, for us as human beings, the greatest treasure we can ever encounter.

Conclusion

Christianity is often seen as something which is about keeping Rules.

It's true we are called to follow Jesus, but this is so that we might be enabled to live the best life we can. If God is the Creator, then we are created to live in tune with the God who created us.

And if Jesus is our Treasure, it is something we should desire, because we know that in Jesus, we can be assured of God's Love and Acceptance forever.

I'd like to conclude with these words of assurance from today's reading from Paul's letter to the Romans:-

(Romans 8:38,39)

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.