

Dear Friends,

What is the "Treasure" of which Jesus spoke in this parable? The field? Why must you "Buy" the field to gain possession of the treasure? Perhaps Paul suggested the answer in this verse.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:7 KJV)

I suggest the "Field" we must "Buy" to gain the treasure might be our own carnality. We must learn to control it, something that we do only at great price to that carnality. Perhaps it might be those other folks in our church family. You know them. Most of the time they are dear, precious "Saints." Ah, but occasionally they can be as offensive and obnoxious as anyone. Do we abandon the "Treasure" of the Lord's kingdom because of them? No, we "Pay the price" to long-suffer them for the precious value of the "Kingdom treasure." But we should also not forget. On other occasions we might well become their "Field" which they must long-suffer for their treasure.

Keep your heart focused on your "Kingdom treasure." Don't falter into second thoughts as to whether the treasure is worth the price you must pay or not. Jesus makes doubly sure; it always is worth it and far more. My constant challenge; am I truly willing to pay the price, the daily price I just pay for this treasure. It just keeps costing, doesn't it? But it also just keeps giving, too. And what it gives is always far more precious than whatever we must pay for it. Keep the faith. Stay tightly connected to your "Treasure."

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

Parable of Treasure in a Field

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (Matthew 13:44 KJV 1900)

After the parable of the leaven, Matthew records Jesus' explanation of the wheat-tares parable. Following that explanation, Jesus returned to more parables with "Again...."

Sandra occasionally teases me about some of the daytime television programs I watch. I enjoy several programs that deal with the proverbial "Treasure Hunt" of one sort or another. Occasionally archaeologists learn enough from history to have a good idea what they are looking for and what they shall find, should they discover that ancient treasure. They have good evidence treasure, but they will not know the details unless they discover it. Before you and I entered our "Kingdom of heaven" lifestyle, did we have any real sense of its reality? Vague, perhaps. Specific and detailed, not at all. We knew the Lord planted a treasure within our reach, and we longed for that treasure.

The point almost leaps off the page at us. What is the "Price" one must pay to purchase the field in which he/she has discovered the treasure of the Lord's kingdom? Jesus didn't address this question in the parable, though He covered it repeatedly in His teaching. Pastors often encounter half-hearted believers who are truly believers, but they balk when they realize the actual price they must pay for a "Kingdom of heaven" lifestyle. Sadly, if they gained a valid appreciation for the true value of this kingdom, they'd pay any price to gain it. But, having only seen the kingdom from some distance and never fully sensing the real value, they refuse to pay the price necessary. They'll linger around the borders. They occasionally even learn the language and visit the kingdom, or at least appear to do so. But they have decided the price required is too high, and they have no intention of paying that price for the privilege. Often these people live with a cloud over their heads, a cloud they never see, for they have convinced themselves that the

“Weather” in their “Kingdom” is as good as it gets, and they try to muster up a measure of contentment, despite always struggling with what might have been and what they chose not to “Pay the price” to obtain.

In his gospel record, John identifies one group of Jesus’ disciples who refused to pay the price for the “Kingdom of heaven,” even though Jesus Himself showed it to them.

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? (John 6:60 KJV)

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (John 6:66 KJV)

For folks who live with preconceived non-kingdom of heaven ideas about Jesus and His kingdom, these verses pose a painful dilemma. John categorically states that they were disciples. However, the dilemma resides in the fact that inspired Scripture refers to them as “**his disciples**.” John didn’t write that they were pretenders or false disciples or not “Real disciples” or, in the common language of our day, “Not real children of God” at all. He simply and directly describes them as “**his disciples**.” I’ve talked with folks whose bad belief systems choked at this lesson. “Well, they later repented and returned to Jesus.” When I ask these folks for “Book, chapter, and verse” of Scripture that documents their claim, they never produce a single verse. They can’t. No such verse exists in the whole of the New Testament. They didn’t return, they didn’t persevere, but inspired Scripture categorically describes them as “**his disciples**.” A false belief system can’t ignore this inspired truth and legalistically send them to hell, as if they were not disciples at all. And yet, quite clearly, they did not “Persevere in faith and holiness.” How many “Disciples” in our day follow the sad and disappointing example of these people? They are children of God. In fact, they might refer to themselves as disciples. But the reality of Scripture challenges the claim. They stubbornly and consistently refuse to pay the price of true, New Testament “Discipleship.” And Jesus’ parable specifically defines His “Kingdom” as the treasure. We only gain the enriching grace of His “Kingdom” by paying the price to buy the field.

In this brief parable, Jesus didn’t say a word about the details of the treasure. It is a treasure; He made that point obvious. And it is hid in a field. Despite the brevity, Jesus gave us substantial information. The desired treasure is hid in a field. The man who was seeking that treasure apparently had no option to simply purchase the treasure. If he wanted the treasure, he must buy the whole field to gain proper ownership of the treasure hid in it. Rest assured, as much as we might like to think of every moment in life and every relationship with our church family to be saturated with spiritual honey, we must face reality. The treasure of Jesus’ “Kingdom of heaven” is worth far more than the price He requires us to pay for it. However, we can only gain that treasure by buying the whole field. The field is as real as the treasure, and sometimes that field grows weeds. Scripture teaches us to seek out and develop strong relationship—“Fellowship”—with godly believers who are as familiar with the treasure as we, and who have also paid the price to have it in their lives. But every church, every fellowship of churches, every denomination has more than its share of people who have failed to pay the price for the true treasure of Jesus’ heavenly kingdom. You can’t live with only the treasure. “You bought the field.” So you must live with that field and work to manage it in a wise and beneficial “Kingdom of heaven” manner. It is possible for very sincere believers to become so tangled up in the weeds and briars of the “Field” that they compromise and lose their joy in the treasure. For you and me, the treasure is the Lord’s “Kingdom blessings” and fellowship, fellowship with Him and with His faithful followers in our lives. The field is the whole body of human believers in our “Church family.” They are no less human than you or I. Sometimes they say or do things that disappoint us. But never forget. You and I make up part of their “Field.” Do we always grow pristine wheat for them, or do we sometimes dish up weeds and thorns for them to face? New Testament teaching is consistent and

emphatic. We are ever to examine our own self and actions, not our brothers and sisters. Part of Jesus' "Kingdom" ethics requires that focused self-examination, coupled with a refusal to judge and criticize or fault-find other believers.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2 Corinthians 13:5 KJV)

Many believers ignore the primary lesson of self-examination in this verse and put all their focus on "reprobates," often judging who in their circle of Christian acquaintances are or are not "Reprobates," not saved according to their opinion. To be reprobate in the sense of this verse and the meaning of the word translated "reprobates" is to be worthless. If we invest our energy in judging who is and who is not saved, we are liable to become "Worthless" to our brothers and sisters. We become a weedy, thorny section of the "Field" they purchased for their treasure instead of an edifying encouragement to them in their pursuit of greater kingdom treasures.

Further if we invest our time and energy scrutinizing our brothers and sisters, finding fault with them and making doubly sure to get in their face and tell them about their faults, we make ourselves part of their weeds and thorns which they must contend with to truly own the treasure. Jesus taught this warning many times. Can we forget His lesson in the Sermon on the Mount regarding "Motes and beams"?

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5 KJV)

Jesus was a master at the fine art of teaching by hyperbole. In this lesson He reminds us. When we turn our self-examination into other-believer-examination, and criticize them, we are like someone with a log in his eye, approaching a friend with a speck of dust in his eye, offering to help him remove the speck. How can we help anyone else until we get the log out of our own eye? Before we offer the first word of criticism or fault-finding to a brother or sister, we need to look within. Do we have personal faults that are far more offensive to the Lord than our brother's speck of dust? If so, leave off the fault-finding and work on yourself. When you can look in the mirror and honestly conclude that you are without fault, you may consider criticizing others. Even so, Paul cautions us as we work to help our fellow-believers.

*...restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; **considering thyself**, lest thou also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1b KJV)*

Most pastors would strongly agree from their pastoral experience. If believers invested the time and mental energy which they sometimes spend criticizing others, often telling them and others all the details of their faults, in self-examination and efforts to grow their own faith stronger, churches would be much healthier places. Godly faith begins "At home." Based on Paul's description of spiritual armor (Ephesians

6:10-19), ***our primary spiritual battlefield resides within us, in our minds***, not in those other people, known or unknown, whom we scrutinize and often attack. To the extent we ignore—actually contradict—Paul’s wise words, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,*” (Ephesians 6:12) we fight the wrong adversary, and we always lose the battle.

Every piece of spiritual armor—indeed, the whole war that Paul identifies in this lesson—relates to our mind. Think. Our primary battlefield is our own mind. We either lose our personal spiritual high ground or defend it within, not by attacking our brothers and sisters in the faith.

Prayerfully consider. By my conduct today toward my brothers and sisters in Jesus, do I enhance their sense of the “Treasure,” or do I become, for them, part of the encumbering field?

Elder Joe Holder