

“ONE MUST SEE THE TREASURE”

Imagine that you are a fellow in Suffolk, England. You have been plowing along, and, as you plow, you hit a box. You bend down and dig around the box. You open the box, and in it you find gold and silver and pewter dishes from the Roman era. Would you be excited? Of course, anyone would.

We are always excited by stories of treasure. I think Jesus knew that, and so our today's two parables are parables about wonderful treasures.

It would seem that Jesus may have been concerned that His disciples will have a misunderstanding of the nature of the kingdom. They may be tempted to see the kingdom as primarily a group of rules, things that are demanded of the believer. They may fail to see the kingdom as a wonderful privilege that fills the life of the believer with joy. Each of these parables is but one sentence long, three verses in total.

The first parable is the parable of the hidden treasure. It was not at all unusual in the first century A.D. for someone to hide money in a field. One could hide his money in his house, but, when marauders would come through, one might get driven out of his house, and the marauders would take that money. One could invest the money but he might lose it. The safe place was a hole in the ground.

The man in our story is a sharecropper. He has been farming his rented field. As he plowed the ground, he hits something, a box full of money. He digs a hole, buries it again, goes, takes all that he has, and buys the field so that the field will be his.

The second parable is the pearl of great price. This time the parable of heaven is likened to a merchant seeking fine pearls. Upon finding one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. The man was merchant, likely a wholesaler. It is the word from which we get our English word emporium. He has spent his whole life looking for these wonderful pearls. He finds the prettiest one that he has ever seen in his whole life. He sells all that he has and invests everything that he has in this single wonderful pearl that he intends to keep his whole life long.

In a way, the parables are about sacrifice. But really there is no sacrifice at all because two men in the parables are getting something that they value more than what they are giving up. They give up all their possessions to get this wonderful treasure.

The Christian faith, the kingdom, is an adventure and a treasure. Jesus wants His audience to see that. Being a disciple of Jesus is not just a bunch of dumb rules. One must see the treasure which makes living life a joy. It is not about drudgery at all. It is joy. — Mike Moss