

True Value

On this the first Sunday following the resurrection, I will begin by reading three verses found in Matthew the 13th chapter.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:44-46 NASB)

Three short verses contain two similes about the kingdom of heaven. In these parables, Jesus begins to point out the true value of the kingdom of heaven. In these two parables, the person finds something that is of great value. The value is so great that the person is willing to give up all earthly possessions in order to obtain the treasure or the pearl.

In other years, we have been concerned about the events between the resurrection and the ascension. So, why don't we review those again this year? We might find some of the interactions between Jesus and His disciple that we have forgotten or over-looked. The answer is as current as today's news. The Covid 19 pandemic threatens so much more than our health. It threatens our financial security. The panic is real. It is time to reassess what is the value of our life.

In the first of the two parables, it should be understood that the man was not pulling a shady deal by hiding the treasure and then making the offer to buy the land. Under the Mosaic law, items found in a field could be kept. Just think about the old adage: “Finders keepers.” This man knew the treasure was there and he wanted to buy the field. To have this treasure, he was willing to sacrifice all that he owned. He also wanted to have this treasure without the cloud of any impropriety.

The second parable deals with a merchant. This man buys and sells things of value. His specialty is pearls. He finds one pearl that is worth more than all he owns and he is willing to purchase this pearl even though it means that he must liquidate his holdings.

Both parables are tied to the kingdom of heaven. The value of our citizenship in that kingdom is worth far more than any earthly goods we may acquire or hold. The current sequestration or “social distancing” is having and will continue to have an impact on our daily lives. Many things that we have taken for granted like our jobs, our life-style, our families are being changed. Our ability to support ourselves is shaken. Have we sold all we own and purchased the lasting treasure? This time of austerity and “social distancing” may help us to more clearly see where we have erected gods in our life as we unwittingly turned away from the Jehovah God.

We all fully understand (or at least we think we understand) that we are not to have any other god before God. We all want to think that we will be in the kingdom of God when our time on earth is finished. Yet, many of us have made choices that demonstrate otherwise. This morning we will look at a couple of examples where some of us have made choices that pushed God into the shadows. This pandemic is shining the light on those false gods and may be pushing us back to the correct choices. I am reminded of what Joseph told his brothers when they came to Egypt for food.

As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (Genesis 50:20 NASB)

The first area that has affected all of us is in the realm of finance. Some indicators estimate a loss of more than \$1 trillion. This translates into a loss for those retired individuals depending on various savings instruments to provide a stable income. Worse, as markets loss value, companies

begin to cut back to sustain their viability. Those cut backs translate into job losses for people depending on their paycheck to cover their living expenses. On top of this, the pressure to stay away from public venues causes more closures and job loss.

For so many, the affluence of savings, income, and comfort found in having sufficient resources to slake our desires has lulled us into a position where God has become an afterthought. Our jobs demanded and received first priority in our life. Every minute of every day we are tied to our jobs through email, text messages, or every conscious thought is spend pondering our careers. The pursuit of money has become our god and we never even noticed.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus addresses our love for money. Let's turn to the 6th chapter and read.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“The eye is the lamp of the body; so, then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:19-24 NASB)

In verses 19 through 21, we are cautioned about where we place out treasure. Then, in the next two verses it seems to be jumping to a different theme. This is not the case. In so many places within the Bible, the reference to light and God or Jesus directs us to follow the light. When our treasure is in God's kingdom, our heart is there and we have His light to bring us sight. When we read **eye is clear**, place the word healthy for clear. This is a call to view our earthly goods in a health manner.

In verse 24, Jesus turns to the reality. If money has taken control of our life, if our sight is so cloudy that we fail to see the importance of anything beyond money, we are no longer serving God. The word that I read **wealth** is sometimes translated as mammon. It comes from the Greek word mamonas μαμωνᾶς which means riches or wealth. It is derived from the Aramaic word that also means trusted, steadfast, or firm. This makes sense. Money gives us a sense of security. We trust in it to cover our needs and our future needs.

Seeing our financial security threatened brings on needless worries and anxieties. Jesus continues to address those in this same section on His sermon.

“For this reason, I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek

(Or continually seek) first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added (Or provided) to you. (Matthew 6:25-33 NASB)

Another area of our life that has been affected is our relationship with our family. Many families have become distant and isolated over the years. Our affluence may have contributed to this. Our drive to succeed in our careers has caused us to spend less time with our spouse and our children. We make up for this by outside activities that pull us away from our homes. We have outside interest that fill up all of our free time and destroys the happy homes that we all long to enjoy. I recently read a posting where a man was commenting on the absence of televised sports caused him to notice that there was a woman sitting on the couch with him. He said: "She seems nice. I think she may be my wife." Of course, this is a joke but it has become real. Our outside interest has taken the place of a true relationships with our family.

Families are a gift designed by and given by God. In the very beginning, God gave Adam the gift of a wife.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So, the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said,

**"This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."**

For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18-24 NASB)

The idea behind two becoming one goes far beyond the sexual coupling. It is a union of kindred hearts, spirits, and dreams. We have allowed outside diversions to tear apart this union.

Perhaps this pandemic will allow us to refocus on those things that are of real value. My prayer is that we will realize that we must never allow anything to stand between us and God. Nor should we allow anything to interfere with the family unit as God designed. Won't you join me in this prayer?