

*“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (Matthew 13:52)*

What do you treasure most in this life and what are you willing to do to in order to obtain it?

In one way or another, we are all treasure hunters. We set goals. We want the good life, the American dream, however you think about that. Our life becomes focused on getting what we want out of life. Notice how much of our political discourse focuses on that.

Treasure can actually get us into trouble - especially when it's money or property or possessions. Far too many people spend their lives dedicated to growing this kind of treasure and fail to wake up to the real, lasting treasures of life. We know those people and see them all around us. Perhaps we have been them at one time or another. We forget and get invested in the wrong treasure.

*Once upon a time, two families came to a rabbi wanting him to settle a dispute about their land. He listened to the members of one family as they recounted how they had received this land as their inheritance from their ancestors and how it had been in their family for generations. They had maps and papers to prove it. Then the rabbi listened to the other family. Its member described how they had lived on the land for years, working it and harvesting it. They claimed that they knew the land intimately and that it was their land. They didn't have the papers to prove it, but they had calluses and sore backs and the harvest and the produce of the land. The rabbi looked at them both and backed away from between them. They turned on him and said, “Decide, rabbi, who owns this land.” But the rabbi knelt down on the land and put his ear to the ground, listening. Finally he stood up and looked at both families. He said: “I had to listen to the both of you, but I had to listen to the land, the center of this dispute also, and the land has spoken. It has told me this: ‘Neither of you owns the land you stand on. It is the land that owns you.’”<sup>1</sup>*

Does our treasure own us? What treasure are we hunting?

For Jesus, treasure is all about what he calls “the kingdom of heaven”. The kingdom of heaven is that place or level of existence where the life of the Divine is fully present and active, where God's life of love abounds. For Jesus, this is the most valuable treasure you can possess – to live a life that is rooted in the kingdom of heaven, a life that exudes compassion, love, mercy and forgiveness.

That life he says, is like a mustard seed that grows into a shrub where there is room for all. It's like yeast that builds flour into a loaf of bread where all are fed as it is broken and shared. It's a treasure to seek until it is finally found – a seeking that is a life's work.

It's like a net that captures all the fish but keeps only that which is most valued.

The kingdom of heaven, says Jesus, has scribes. Scribes are the storytellers, the ones who write the stories and share them.

Now, I never heard when I was growing up that being a Christian, a follower of Jesus, meant that I am being trained to be a scribe. I don't remember hearing, either, that the purpose of my life was to dwell richly in God's love and become that love myself. I don't remember, in fact, hearing much about the kingdom of heaven unless it was someplace to go after I died.

Jesus is saying something far more dynamic and enriching, but also challenging about the life that we have been given by our Creator. We have to make choices about what we invest ourselves in. And these are long term investments that we're talking about, not quick fixes, or simple decisions. We're talking about life changing commitments and decisions that may change the course of life.

We heard from the story of Jacob again this morning. Jacob has left the death-bed of his father Isaac with his blessing and the instruction to find a Hebrew wife. Last week, on his journey, he has a dream about God's call and the blessing that has been bestowed upon him that he is to share with the whole world through his descendants. He rises, recognizing, perhaps for the first time, that God's hand is in his searching and travels. Eventually he meets Rachel at a well where she has come to water her sheep. Laban welcomes him in and offers to pay him for his work, for Laban has no sons, only daughters. They agree that the wage for seven years work will his daughter Rachel. Ultimately he ends up obtaining two wives: Rachel and her sister, Leah.

Now who of you would have such patience? Would you work seven years in order to marry your beloved? There is a sense here of the work of God that matures and comes forth over time – just as it takes a long time for a mustard seed to grow into a bush that will shield many birds, or yeast to grow a loaf of bread, or a net to ultimately bring in many fish.

The life of God abounds in our lives in its own time, but we have to be willing to be trained, to choose a life rooted in love which is the only treasure worth having because it is the very essence of the kingdom.

This morning we bring a potential new scribe into the realm of God's love and grace. His parents and Godparents, with the help of God, are planting new seeds in his being that, if nurtured and fertilized with teaching and love, will grow into the Christ-like being that he is created to be. He is part of the new that we bring forth from our treasure this day. And we connect him to the old as the many generations before him have walked this same path. His story is joined to their story in Christ.

What kind of a treasure hunter will he become? Let us hope and pray that he will labor for the treasure of the kingdom which is love. And let us renew that commitment for our own lives. Let the treasure of God's love and blessing emerge from our own lives so that it can be shared with all.

There is a Japanese folk saying: *The scent of the flower remains on the hands of the person who gives the gift away.*<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, this gift of the kingdom is not for us to possess but rather it is for giving away, for that is how it will spread and grow and become a place of blessing for all peoples.

Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> *Parables* by Megan McKenna, Orbis Books, 1994, p.53

<sup>2</sup> Same book, p.57.