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Peace, Sun Prairie
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Pentecost 10

Matthew 13:44-52

Praise be to Christ! All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

As the man pulled out his keys, a small coin fell from his pocket and rolled across the parking lot. Figuring it couldn't possibly be worth chasing after he got in his car and hurried off to his next errand. Later, a little girl who collected coins picked up that coin and jumped for joy! That tossed aside coin was extremely rare, worth a small fortune.

Surely that man would have acted differently if he had only realized what a treasure he had held in his hands. Certainly, he wouldn't have just let it roll away. Don't you think he would have, well, *treasured* it?

Dear friends in Jesus, by God's undeserved love, you and I possess a treasure worth more than any rare coin, more valuable than all the gold of King Solomon. Indeed, we have a treasure greater than all the world. Let us listen to Jesus teach us about that treasure this morning, so that we always *treasure*, we always **Hold onto the greatest Treasure.**

In Matthew 13, Jesus uses parables, stories from everyday life that are filled with heavenly meaning. Each little story Jesus tells here teaches important truths about **the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven** refers to God's coming and reigning as King in human hearts through the promises of His love and forgiveness in the Savior. Faith in Jesus, the Savior King—faith worked by the Holy Spirit through the gospel good news in God's Word and Sacraments—faith in Jesus is what makes a person part of **the Kingdom of Heaven.**

So God's **Kingdom** has everything to do with His Word. And God's Word, the whole Bible is centered on Jesus, how we need Him and how He saves us. Therefore, the Psalm tells us God's Word is **better**

than much pure gold. Therefore we just sang: *Jesus Priceless Treasure.*

And no wonder, since Jesus tells us: **The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field... a treasure** so priceless, it is worth giving up everything else to hang onto it. He also tells us it is like a merchant who discovered the *finest* of pearls, **one of great value**, one worth more than any other.

The main point of these parables is clear: there is no treasure greater than Jesus. And with Jesus comes the treasures of His saving work, His promise of forgiveness of sins, peace with God, an everlasting life in heavenly joy and bliss, all freely given by Him through His Word. Yes, Jesus is the **greatest Treasure** to which nothing else can compare.

If you have Jesus, but never have a dime to your name, you would be rich, rich with the infinite wealth of eternal life. If we have God's gift of faith in Jesus, but lose our earthly lives, we've truly lost *nothing*. For in Jesus, we have never ending life in eternal ages of happiness with God, that no thief can steal and no rust or moth can destroy.

Only the treasure of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness He gives will save us on the day the third story in our reading is fulfilled. When the net is drawn up on shore full of all kinds of fish, the angels sort out all who have ever lived into their eternal destinations: everlasting joy for those God makes righteous through trust in Jesus and everlasting **weeping** for all who rejected the Lord and His ways.

Now earthly treasures and possessions are wonderful blessings from God He **provides for our enjoyment**. But as our second lesson reminded us, we are not to put our confidence or our **hope** in earthly wealth, but in God alone. Earthly treasure dare not come ahead of Jesus!

Now you this. You know Jesus is the only true, lasting, **greatest Treasure**, and that we must never **let go** of Christ! Even the little children in preschool and Sunday School know it!

We know it. But to our sinful shame, we don't always act like it! We would never actually *say* that our hobbies, jobs, sports, entertainment, video games or

other things or people are more important than Jesus, yet we can sure act like it at times! Even as we come to church and open our Bibles, we don't perfectly regard God's Word as the stunning treasure it is.

If someone handed you a treasure map that was guaranteed to lead you to treasure, wouldn't you hang on to it and eagerly follow it! The Bible is such a map, bringing us eternal riches in Jesus. But because I have an old sinful nature just like you, I too am guilty of not always treating worship, Bible study, family devotions and Sunday school like an eager treasure hunt.

Every day we fall short of always living like the heavenly rich people God has made us in Jesus. How often have we failed to boldly share the golden good news of Jesus with others around us or put His Word into action in our lives, using it to guide us in all we do.

Like every sin, our failure to treasure and hold tightly onto God's greatest gifts in Word and Sacrament earns us the status of the wicked, **bad fish** in Jesus' story. Ever smelled, rotten, decaying fish? It's awful, it's putrid, disgusting. It's the tiniest glimpse of how

bad your sin and mine stinks before the Holy God and Judge of all.

What could possibly save us from the **weeping and gnashing of teeth** in hell our rotten, stinking sin deserves?

The answer of course is **treasure**—*the* **Treasure** greater than heaven and earth. The treasure of the **Gospel**—the astonishing good news that God did the unthinkable. Give up all you have for a priceless treasure, absolutely! But who would give up all they have for something that smelled as rotten as week old fish guts!

But that's exactly what God in the unsearchable depths of His undeserved love did for you and me! God the Father so loved the world of smelly sinners, us included, that He gave His greatest treasure, His dear beloved Son up to save us!

In love for us, God the Son, gave up everything to rescue us! He left His throne on high. He exchanged heavenly riches for a humble birth in Bethlehem. The Lord, the owner of heaven and earth, became a poor

and lowly servant. Just as Jesus said: **Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head** (Matthew 8:20).

But Jesus' life *was* rich in perfection. Christ always treasured and lived God's Word, whether joyfully digging into its truths as a 12 year old in the temple, or patiently teaching his disciples, or carefully keeping every promise the foretold of His life and work.

And then in the most costly love of all, Jesus took our place, the place we earned by failing to treat God and His Word as our **greatest treasure**.

Though we would turn away from a stink as disgusting as rotten fish, Jesus chose to let all the stench of our sin fall on himself. On the cross, He bore the punishment of acting like temporary blessings are more important than the eternal. As He suffered on the cross, Jesus took the **weeping and gnashing of teeth** and the **fiery furnace** of God's holy anger against our rotten sin, so that trusting in Him we will never have to experience what hell is like.

Then three days later Jesus presented the crown jewel that says forgiveness of every sin and a place in heaven has been paid for in full by Jesus as He gave us the golden treasure of His empty Easter tomb!

And why did Jesus do all this? St. Paul answers: **though (Christ) was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich** (2 Cor 8:9).

All done for you. All done for me. Now through the treasure of Holy Spirit worked faith in Jesus we have Jesus' own riches: all our sin forgiven, life with God when we die, our bodies rising at the last day to endless life and bliss. These are the **riches** Jesus purchased and won for us, the **riches** the Holy Spirit personally puts into our hands of faith—faith given and built up in the gospel promises of the Bible, our Baptisms and treasure of the Lord's Supper.

Above all that, that's what you—and the Lord through you—have called Pastor Werre and me to do: to keep pointing you to Jesus in Word and Sacrament, so that we always **hold onto the greatest treasure** and never let go! And hanging onto Jesus in His Word is

what He will use to ready us to share the priceless treasure of Jesus' love with those around us, in our homes, schools, and community.

If there is only one thing you learn as I preach and teach God's Word to you, let it be this: **Hold onto Jesus, He is the greatest Treasure!** Amen.

The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. Amen.