

“What Is Priceless?”

Matthew 13:46

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While I was working on my message, an old story came across my mind and stayed for a while. The story goes like this: There once lived a wise and wealthy farmer who had three sons, he wanted to leave all of his money to one of his three sons, but he didn't know which one he should give it to. One day, he worried that after his death his sons might quarrel about his property and decided to divide it. He called his sons and told them about his division. He said that the house would go to the person who could fill the room with something bought with the coins that he gave to them. Three sons went to the market. The first son bought straw, but there was not enough to fill the room. The room was still more than half empty. *“Well done”* said the father. The second bought some sacks of feathers. He began to pour out feathers from the sacks. When he had emptied the last sack, the room was still less than half full. *“Now we shall see what our youngest has to offer,”* said the father. The youngest son went and bought a candle and a box of matches. He took out a small candle from his pocket and lit it. The whole room was filled with a soft light. The youngest son fulfilled what the father asked. Brothers and father believed that the house should go to the youngest son.

The idea that a small candle filled the entire room stimulated my imagination. What are things that have been filling our life? What will be things that could make our life 'complete'? The image that the light fills the room is overlapped with our Scripture reading today. Can we picture this scene in our mind? Jesus sat beside the sea and people were gathered to hear his preaching about the Kingdom of God. Do you think that Jesus was the type of preacher who reads a sermon script following sentence by sentence like me (joke!!) or was he a dynamic speaker who had passion and enthusiasm proclaiming the Kingdom of God? Here Jesus didn't analyze nor wanted to give his audience information about what the Kingdom of God is. Rather, he invited them to dream the Kingdom and experience God's Kingdom in their lives. I imagine Jesus as a 'reporter' who is giving us breaking news in this story. I imagined Jesus was filled with the joy of the Kingdom of God. Eugene Peterson paraphrases our reading this way, "God's kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field for years and then **accidentally** found by a **trespasser**. The finder is **ecstatic**—what a find!—and proceeds to sell everything he owns to buy that field." The main point of this story is joy of the Kingdom of God. Economically speaking, no one will invest their money unless it is proven that this treasure is more valuable than the entire field. But here

finding treasure is priceless! Jesus wanted to share that nothing can compare with the joy of God's Kingdom.

In Jesus' time, it was very strange and actually dangerous to talk about personal God or the concept of God for all individuals, especially to the Israelites, because God is their God who created the world, had guided them from Egypt and gave them Moses' law and rules to be kept as God's chosen people. But Jesus disrespected and disgraced their God. In short, Jesus Christ came to break this stereotype of God's understandings and made God available to everyone. His public ministry was to share the joy of experiencing God's grace and mercy in each person's life! Jesus proclaimed good news everywhere he went. He called his people and made his disciples and had them carry out this mission from Jerusalem to the end of the world. God is not a secret to be kept in Jewish culture, but God is for all people. Good news must be spread out over the world! I feel Jesus' compassion to share God with everyone in our reading. What is the essence of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' passionate voice? What did Jesus want to tell us in this parable of "treasure hidden in a field"? The entire purpose of Jesus' ministry was geared to focus on the Kingdom of God. And we can enter the Kingdom of God not by keeping Moses' law, but by our experiencing God. It is grace that God found us and met us personally. It is an encounter just between you and God in solitude. When we experience God in our lives, God's Kingdom happens within us.

Many times I feel humbled by our congregation's dedication and faithful work for the church. Actually, your pledges, your prayer, your support and commitment enable this church to exist here and keep our ministries running and helping us to do our mission works. Without you, there is no Fair Oaks Church here. As a pastor, I am just a servant for the church. Our church campus has been improved much by the commitment and dedication of the Trustees. Lance and Tom's excellent leadership and members' faithful service made it possible. One week, I found Trustee members working at the church every single day of the whole week. Not only have I seen the Trustees, but I also have witnessed the other ministry teams' working many hours. I know why you show your faithful commitment and love for this church. You have experienced God through this church. And your joy of God's Kingdom is priceless! I know why you want to care about this church and continue to support this church ministry because you wish that our church continues to be a place for people to experience God's grace and mercy for those who are seeking God in time of their need. Church is not just a building but is a special place for people to experience God and God's Kingdom where they feel accepted, understood, and welcomed wherever they come from. I believe that is why you care about this church.

Last week, someone shared with me how much he appreciated the church. He told me that when he lost his wife, he felt that he was lost and left alone in a dark tunnel. He didn't know where he was headed. There was no light but he was overwhelmed by weight of life. Church was a special place for him to experience God's comfort, peace, and mercy through support and care of this community. He deeply thanked God for the gift of church as a way of experiencing God. Truly, church is bigger than just a community, a family and a place of worship. Rather, it is a special space for you to experience your God in your singing, prayer, gratitude or in time of your solitude, lonesomeness and even in time of hardships and suffering. Jesus Christ wanted to share this wonderful news and that God with his disciples and friends. He wants to share this joy with us as well this morning. God's Kingdom is not far away or "up there" but "right here and now" and "within us". Find this treasure and make it yours in your life. This is what Jesus urges us to experience. I hope we all experience God through our Sunday worship and other ministry opportunities in this church. That is priceless. Amen.