Pentecost 10 Matthew 13:44-52
August 9, 2020 233-477-304-469

"Did You Understand All These Things?"
I. The value of the gospel.
II. The warning about hypocrisy.
III. The encouragement to continue to learn God's Word.

Dear Christian friends,

Do you remember POP QUIZZES from school? ALL OF A SUDDEN the teacher has you close your books and POPS a quiz on you.

Jesus here gave His disciples a pop quiz. It had been a long day of **teaching**. This chapter begins, ***"A large crowd gathered around Jesus. So He stepped into a boat and sat down, while the people stood on the shore. He told them many things in parables."*** Seven parables and a few explanations later Jesus asked His disciples, ***"Did you understand all these things?"***

Today Jesus POPS that same quiz on us. "DID YOU UNDERSTAND ALL THESE THINGS?" Do YOU **understand** 1)the value of the **gospel**, 2)the warning about **hypocrisy** and 3)the encouragement to **continue to learn** God's Word?

I. The value of the gospel.

Jesus uses two short parables to **teach** us the VALUE of the gospel. The first parable is this – ***"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid again. In his joy, he goes away and sells all that he has and buys that field."***

That picture might strike us as STRANGE but it **wasn't** back then. You **couldn't** just rent a SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX at the 1st Bank of Jerusalem to store your **valuables**. But they did have the **problems** of CRIME – WAR – invading armies looting and **plundering**. So FOR SAFEKEEPING people **would bury** their valuables in their fields. But **what sometimes happened** was that you got killed or died WITHOUT TELLING anyone **where** your treasure was buried. You could be taken a POW or forced to flee for your life. Then YEARS LATER **someone** would accidentally stumble onto your **buried treasure**.

That's the case here. This man stumbles across the treasure – realizes its VALUE – and he just HAS TO HAVE it. ***"In his joy, he goes away and sells all that he has and buys that field."***

The second parable is SIMILAR – but DIFFERENT. ***"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls. When he found one very valuable pearl, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."*** This man is ON THE LOOK OUT for ***"fine pearls."*** He finds a ***"very valuable"*** pearl. He just HAS TO HAVE it. ***"He sold ALL that he had"*** to buy it.

Think how many people WALKED BY that field and never realized the ***"treasure"*** that was there. **Think how many** people saw that one pearl but never realized its ***"value."*** That HAPPENS with the gospel too, doesn't it? **Look how many** people could come to church but DON'T – even deliberately avoid it. **Look how many** people have a Bible but don't read it because they're TOO BUSY or it's TOO BORING. **Look how many** people hear the **gospel** but then WALK AWAY from Jesus.

Do YOU understand the ***"value"*** of the **gospel**? We will if we HONESTLY face up to our **sin** and **guilt**. We're not basically GOOD, DECENT people. We haven't just made a FEW MISTAKES along the way. ***"There is no one righteous, not even one. All have turned away and become worthless."*** That's God's judgment on you and me and all people. If that sounds harsh then UNDERSTAND **God's standards**. God isn't looking for a GOOD TRY but perfect obedience. God isn't looking for A PLACE in our lives. God demands FIRST place **all to Himself**. God doesn't want to be a VISITOR in our lives

but LORD of our lives. Anything less than that is **totally** UNACCEPTABLE. **Anything less** is sin – rebellion – **defiance**. God has plenty of GOOD REASONS to make our lives now a **living hell** and then send us to hell forever.

That fact HELPS US SEE the ***"value"*** of the gospel. Instead of GIVING UP on us God gave us His own Son to be our Savior. **Instead** of sending us to hell God send us to Bethlehem – **Calvary** – to Jesus' empty grave on Easter morning. The gospel proclaims that Jesus has taken care of **everything** for us. That holy – ***"righteous"*** – life we owed God – that's the life Jesus lived for us. The death and hell **we deserved** because of our sins – that's exactly what Jesus endured on the cross. Jesus was punished **in our place** – for **our** sins. AND NOW Jesus lives risen triumphant over death and the grave.

Do YOU understand the value of **that** gospel? TRUSTING in Jesus we have God's forgiveness FULL and free – we have peace with God – we are going straight to heaven when we die! Isn't that gospel something we **just** HAVE TO HAVE – just like those men HAD TO HAVE that ***"treasure"*** – that ***"pearl"***?

Do YOU understand how the ***"value"*** of the gospel REARRANGES our priorities in life? That **priceless gospel** is what makes church and Communion – Bible study and **daily devotions** SO SPECIAL and IMPORTANT. That **priceless gospel** is what makes Christian education and **mission work** SO URGENT and NECESSARY.

We can't buy the gospel – it's God's GIFT to us. But we can foolishly trade the gospel FOR JUNK. **For some** people it's more important to BE POPULAR – to cater to their sinful natures – to **make money**, etc. Their priorities show that they DON'T REALLY VALUE the gospel. Do YOU understand this?

Jesus has another parable for us. Do YOU understand…

II. The warning about hypocrisy.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When the net was filled, they pulled it onto the shore. They sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but threw the bad ones away." How often hadn't these people SEEN JUST THIS – fishermen letting down their **nets** – catching **all kinds** of fish – then separating the good from the bad.

The net in this parable is **the gospel**. As the gospel is preached – **taught** – **read** – **heard** – many people are ***"caught."*** The net was ***"full."*** DON'T MISS that point! The gospel WORKS! That simple good news of Jesus and His cross is ***"the power of God unto salvation."*** The gospel doesn't need to be UPDATED. It doesn't need GIMMICKS to make it **more effective**. The gospel needs to BE HEARD – be SHARED.

With this parable Jesus teaches us that in the VISIBLE CHURCH there will be both believers and **hypocrites** – people who only pretend to believe. It's not our business to **sort out** the hypocrites. The angels will do that on the Last Day. WE may be fooled by the hypocrites but GOD isn't.

What exactly is a **Christian**? A person who has cleaned up his life? Who shows up in church **pretty regularly**? If that's true then NONE of us are Christians! **With God's help** we may be trying to **straighten out** our lives but we're STILL FAR from perfect. We may come to **church faithfully** but are we always paying attention? Do we always faithfully LIVE what we've learned? **A Christian** is a person who TRUSTS IN JESUS as his God and Savior. **A Christian** looks to Jesus for forgiveness – counts on Jesus to **get him** to heaven.

A hypocrite says he **believes** in and loves Jesus but he REALLY DOESN'T. God defines a hypocrite – ***"these people honor Me with their lips but their hearts are far from Me."*** HAVING my name on

the church books – coming to church – being a BIG GIVER and really involved **doesn't make** anyone a Christian. The heart trusting in Jesus MAKES a person a Christian. And if the heart really doesn't trust in Jesus that person just ISN'T a Christian.

I can't look into **your** heart and you can't look into mine. But I CAN CHECK my own heart and **you can check** yours. We can't ROOT OUT any hypocrites in church but **with God's help** we can root out any hypocrisy IN OUR OWN hearts and lives.

CHECK yourself. Are there areas of your life that you have PUT OFF LIMITS to God? Do you LET GOD DECIDE your priorities in life – your morals – the **TV shows** you watch – the language you use? Do you say you're a **Christian** but ACT MORE like a **Pharisee**? ***"God, I thank You that I'm not like other people"***?

Do YOU understand the SERIOUSNESS of this warning - understand how much we NEED this **warning**? ***"The angels will throw the wicked into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*** Don't ever underestimate HOW STUBBORN your sinful nature can be. We daily need to CLOBBER it with God's **law** – not cuddle up to it. Do YOU understand that?

Jesus has one more lesson for us –

III. An encouragement to continue to learn God's Word.

The disciples tell Jesus, ***"Yes"*** – they ***"understand these things."*** Jesus doesn't question their answer. But He also doesn't say they NOW KNOW **everything**. There was still plenty more for them to learn. That's ALSO TRUE about us, isn't it? We understand SOME things but there's plenty more for us to learn.

Jesus encourages us to CONTINUE TO LEARN His Word. ***"Every expert in the law who has been trained as a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his treasure both new things and old things."*** Think of a person going through a TREASURE CHEST or rummaging through the **attic**. We can always add to **what's in** the treasure chest/attic. But it's also fun to COME ACROSS stuff already in the treasure chest/attic – things we may have forgotten about.

That's the way it is with God's Word. There **are things** in the Bible we haven't learned yet or **maybe** don't understand yet. But then we study God's Word – we live it- and "AH – NOW I see!" Then there are those times we RUN ACROSS **old, familiar passages** and even though we KNOW THEM WELL it's so great to hear them again. OLD TREASURES and new!

I'm a big believer in MARKING UP your Bible. Use **bookmarks** – underline - **hi-lite** – WHATEVER **works** for you. When something strikes you MARK it **somehow** or other. Then you can go back and **find it** LATER ON. Or it becomes a reminder – **that's right**, I KNEW this – I've been here BEFORE. **Sometimes** I just like FLIPPING THROUGH my Bible and looking at the different passages that are marked up. It's bringing out OLD treasures **as well as** finding NEW ones. Give it a TRY and you'll see what Jesus says here!

Have YOU understood all this? Amen.

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