**Matthew 13:44-52 July 26, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from the Gospel of Matthew the 14th chapter here re-reading these words. “Jesus said, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I truly believe that one man’s trash is another man’s treasure. I’ve always been an avid fan of garage sales and thrift stores. You can truly find treasure in the strangest places, even if they’re mostly filled with trash. I have a brother-in-law who drives around the town of Wausau, Wisconsin and is looking to literally turn trash into treasure, or in this case money. He drives around looking for scrap metal. The people who are throwing out these pieces see them as trash, bur to him, it is treasure. He gladly takes this trash, these old grills and busted up bed frames just to name a few examples, and puts them in the back of his pick-up and takes it in for money. While to them these items are trash, to him it’s treasure.

Items also can be trash one day, and treasure the next. Prices on certain items change during years, or weeks, or even days. It’s been a few weeks since we’ve had an agriculture tip, but did you know that the price of different crops fluctuates like the price of gas? In rural areas on the radio, at the top of each hour you would get an update on the weather for the day, and perhaps some news like you’d have on any other station, but then they also would read the crop prices for the day. Corn up a quarter, Soybeans down a half, and also the different in beef prices. The price fluctuates. Just as it does for different stocks on Wall Street, different pieces of jewelry depending on the price of gold, and a commodity that we all know seems to change every day whether it’s going up or it’s going down. And that’s the price of gasoline. Treasures vary in price, and over time they may be higher or lower depending on the person who sees it, the amount of it in the world, or the demand of it by the consumer. But what about a very special treasure. The kind of treasure that Jesus is speaking about here in His parable of the Hidden Treasure found in Matthew chapter 13. What kind of treasure is Jesus speaking about to His disciples as He finishes teaching in this long string of parables?

Just as there are many different prices for the same item, there are many various interpretations of this parable and its meaning. Some take the treasure to be the kingdom of heaven and salvation, meaning a knowledge of God. And therefore the man who finds the treasure, is the man who finds God, either through a direct and miraculous revelation, or simply by accepting Jesus into their hearts and receiving the gift of salvation on account of their own actions. This would mean that this parable is simply a way of giving further evidence that salvation is something that is earned and found rather than given. Even though that interpretation may be what our sinful hearts want to hear, so that we can be the ones to feel confident and secure in our own worthiness, and that we are saved because of what we have done, but let me show you a different interpretation.

The treasure, is us. The field, is the world. And Jesus is the one who finds the treasure, sells all that He has, and buys us. It certainly is a different way to look at these words recorded by Matthew. And sadly, just as there is a temptation in the first interpretation to make it all about us and our own works, there is a great temptation in this interpretation as well. After all, if we are the treasure, than we are pretty valuable. We are very special if Jesus gives everything He has in order to buy us! And we must be worth a very high price, if we are worth that sort of effort in order to save.

But that’s where we’re wrong. This parable is not an excuse for us to see ourselves as worthy and a priceless treasure based upon anything that we have done. For anytime we think that we can boast in our own actions, or make ourselves worthy of salvation, we are reminded in God’s Word of what we really are. Sinners. God’s fallen creation. And it wouldn’t be a stretch to even go so far as to say, trash. For Isaiah writes that “We have all become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.” If we were for one second tempted to think that we are a treasure that is priceless based upon anything that we have done, the truth is right here. All of the good we have done outside of Jesus Christ, the good things that we have done for our own glory and our own merit, and our own worthiness to be seen as priceless in the eyes of this world rather than God, is like a polluted garment worth nothing. Something we would pay someone else to dispose of on our behalf. We are not treasure, we are simply trash, for we are sinful and unclean.

Instead of looking inward at ourselves and our own actions for redemption in this parable, the truth can be found in the work of the man who buys the field. For He is the one who shows His love for us. For while we were buried in our sinfulness just as this treasure was in the dirt of a field, Jesus found us, and saw us as treasure. Treasure not because we were sparkly and clean. Treasure not because at this point in time our stock was high and we were a hot commodity. Treasure not based upon anything that we had done, or are doing, or will do in the future. But He saw us as treasure, because His love is a perfect love that we will never understand. And from that moment He went with joy to redeem us, to buy us back from our sin, and to give to us eternal life.

God shows us His love for us in the words that we sang just a few moments ago from our Sermon hymn “Church of God, Elect and Glorious” and you have the benefit of being able to look up these words very easily on your blue hymn sheet as you have it in your bulletin. Verse two: “God has called you out of darkness into his most marvelous light, brought his truth to life within you, turned your blindness into sight.” The darkness of sin, is just as the darkness of dirt. His truth is itself Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, the one who brings life. We see God’s love for us in the words of our Old Testament lesson that told us that “The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” He has called us out of the field of this world, and bought us as His treasure. Christ’s love is so vast that he gives up everything and buys the entire field, for the treasure that is hidden inside. He gives up everything for the entire world, He dies for the sins of treasure and trash alike. And for us believers, for us His children, his love is so great that He buys us back from death with a precious commodity. With a treasure that is beyond any kind of valuations that can be thought up or figured out with our human minds. And Martin Luther brilliantly writes the truth of Jesus’s love for us in His Words from the Small Catechism. Luther writes that Jesus redeemed me a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil *not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious* blood and with His innocent suffering and death”.

A man goes with joy, sells all that he has, and buys that field, therefore buying that treasure. And we know, that Jesus Christ, sold all that He had, by coming down to this Earth, sent from the Father, to become man, and to suffer, and to die. To give up everything, and not just give all his money or possessions, not just to make a donation to a charity and leave it at that. But He gave up, His life, for trash. Trash that He saw as treasure. Trash that He saw value in, because in that trash was the perfect image of God that had been lost since the fall. And by giving away His life, and suffering and dying in our place, we have been given, a treasure beyond any comprehension or understanding. A treasure that can’t possibly be valued by comparing it to anything in this world. For while Jesus Christ has made us His treasure by dying on the cross to buy us back from death and destruction, our treasure is found in His work and not our own. Our treasure is found in His selflessness, and His worthiness, and not the works of our hands. Our treasure is the gift that was given to us, and that is eternal life.

Our joy is that salvation is a treasure that doesn’t fluctuate in price or change with the times. It is a treasure that remains as our comfort throughout our time in this world. It is a treasure that lifts us up and gives us strength to go out into this world and share the Gospel with those around us. It is a treasure that we are reminded of when we see a child born again to new life through the waters of Holy Baptism. A treasure that we receive in the body and blood of Jesus Christ right here in Holy Communion.

While prices in this world may fluctuate, and things may change in value from time to time, may You, My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, know for certain that your faith is a treasure that God has given You. Know that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus Christ our Lord. For we will again be tempted to change the focus of this parable and other parables that we hear to be all about us and our worthiness. To be about our actions in finding the treasure of salvation and about our efforts in making ourselves a priceless treasure, but we can be certain that God has revealed to us the truth in His Holy Word. The truth that we are sinful and unclean, and the truth, that Jesus loved us so much, that He gave up everything to save us. That He died, so that we would live. And that while the devil and the world may see us as sinful trash that is headed for destruction with them, we know that we are saved, and that we have been made treasure, by The Son of God who loved us. Praise God for His gift of salvation, and for our new identity as His treasure, purchased and won by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.