

“Hidden Treasure”

August 2, 2026

First Christian Church

Scripture Text: Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-46

Our Scripture lesson this morning is made up of 4 different parables about the Kingdom of heaven. We have the parable of the mustard seed which highlights how small the mustard seed is compared to the great bush that it grows into. The parable of the leaven or yeast that was added to the flour and caused the whole batch to rise – not a flat part here, a fully raised part here, and a half leaven part here – no, the whole batch is affected. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a hidden treasure that someone uncovers and then reburies so he can buy the land and thereby own the treasure. And finally, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, and upon finding a great one, sells all he has to buy it. Each one of these parables tells us something about the Kingdom of Heaven, but together, they tell us even more.

When we put the parables together, the first thing we notice is the element of hiddenness. The mustard seed disappears into the ground. The yeast is concealed inside three measures of flour. The treasure is buried in a field. The great pearl must be sought out and found. The kingdom of heaven is present and active, but not immediately visible. Like in the bread it talks about, you never get a little bit of yeast caught in your teeth when eating bread. Even when you know it was added to the dough, you cannot see it or taste it. You can see the evidence of its work. You have a loaf of bread as opposed to a cracker. But you can't see it. It is hidden. It works behind the scenes or even under the ground as with the buried treasure. In a time before storage units and safe deposit boxes, it was not unusual to bury your valuables. If you had to leave for an extended amount of time on business or because you were drafted into the army, or if an invading army was coming who was looting and stealing everything of value; you hid your precious things to keep them safe. If something happened and you did not return, your valuables simply remained hidden under the ground. So it was quite possible that you could be walking around (and over) priceless things all the time, completely unaware. You may own a field and have no idea treasure is buried there. Doesn't that describe so many of our friends and neighbors and even family members. The presence of God – the power of God – is all around them. They stress about their lives and their future, oblivious to the peace that passes understanding which surrounds them. They battle through life on their own, counting on physical and mental discipline to keep them out of trouble, clueless of the power of the Holy Spirit available to them. They battle good and evil in their lives and hope they can somehow do more good than evil, give more than they take, so their lives will be seen as positive; never claiming the gifts of forgiveness and grace Jesus offers. They miss out because they cannot see what is waiting just below the surface of things. The Kingdom of heaven doesn't announce itself with fanfare, erect statues and banners of itself, and scream “look at me”. It operates beneath the surface of things, and it requires that those who desire it seek it out.

Then the parables proclaim together, “it is worth it”. Doing the work to seek out and find the hidden Kingdom is worthy it. The mustard seed tells us sowing a little faith in the Kingdom not only grows a plant that produces a harvest, but grows to give shelter and protection to others. Adding just a little Kingdom power changes everything. It says a woman added just a little leaven to enough dough to make 40 or more loaves, and it did its thing with all of it. The return on Kingdom investments is disproportionately huge in your favor. You get way more than you give. “But,” say the parables together, but it will cost you everything you have. The man who finds the treasure sells all that he has to possess it. The merchant who discovers the pearl does the same. You don’t get to just buy in with a little bit of your life. You don’t to say, I will join Christ’s Kingdom with my membership but not my mouth. You don’t get to say I will follow Jesus on Sunday morning in church but not in my marriage and parenting on Monday through Saturday. You don’t get to say you pledge your allegiance to the way of truth with your public image but not in how you spend your money and what you watch in private. When you mix the leaven in the dough, it affects the whole batch.

It is no coincidence that the merchant and the man who finds the treasure found something hidden that was so extraordinary that they reorganized their entire lives in order to claim it. They relinquished everything they had of earthly value in order to claim the bigger prize. It is a picture of putting away the old self who is defined by the values of this world, in order to be transformed by the new.

But it is hard, because this Kingdom of Heaven doesn’t come like we expect. There are no gleaming capital cities with marble columns and soaring executive mansions. God’s army doesn’t plow over every opposition and force all into submission. God doesn’t use power like we would use power. God doesn’t use unending knowledge like we would use knowledge. Tiny seeds, invisible yeast, buried treasure, trading all that you have: had it been left up to us, this is not how we would have described the single most powerful, meaningful, and joyful reality in the universe! But it is how Jesus described it.

According to Dallas Willard, a kingdom is a place where one person’s influence determines what happens. In the case of the kingdom of God, the kingdom – at least for now - is not a geographic spot on a map but rather exists any place and every place where Jesus shapes life. Wherever and whenever Jesus’ wisdom, Jesus’ wit, Jesus’ savvy, Jesus’ words, and Jesus’ love mold the words, actions, thoughts, and life patterns of some person or group of persons, that is God’s kingdom. So we keep plugging away at activities which may look silly or meaningless to the world who are not seeking God, but actually contain the very seed of a new creation. We keep coming to church and singing our old hymns. We open an ancient book called the Bible, looking to find truths that are anything but ancient. We keep gathering at sick beds and death beds and whisper our prayers for the Spirit of resurrection to be with us in life and in death. We

cook and serve on Wednesday night and stock the blessing box with food for those who might need it. We visit those how cannot get out much and give them rides to doctor's offices and appointments. We call. We send cards. We pray. We keep dunking people in water and chew on oyster crackers knowing, hoping they don't just mean something, but mean everything. We quietly carry out our jobs and raise our children and tend our marriages in the belief that God has designs for all those things and it's our job to follow them. We keep pointing people to an old rugged cross, having the boldness to suggest that the man who died on that cross is now the Lord of life. We plant both feet in the Kingdom of heaven. We are all in. We live in Christ's Kingdom, knowing it is this world that is backwards. The Bible tells us so.

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