

Matthew 21-01-24a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is a pleasure to greet the madding throng here that is assembled in the sanctuary and all the rest of you that are joining us remotely. We are going to continue this morning our study in the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 13.

We have seen the parable of the sower, we've seen the parable of the mustard seed, of the wheat and the tares, of the leaven and we're going to pick up this morning with the parables related to treasure beginning in verse 44. We have the two pearl parables and they are quite fascinating in their own right and we're going to endeavor to see their pertinence, meaning and application for our own lives. We'll begin, as we always do, by asking God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, the conversation and the reflection that we have that centers on the truth of God's word.

Shall we pray? Father, it is an awesome privilege to come before your presence, to enter your throne room by the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to claim your cleansing power and your gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit to help us to live our lives in your power and in the strength and guidance and light that is shed by your word. We pray that as we look at this portion of it this morning that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, help us to understand not only the meaning and the intention of the truth that is contained here, but its application, how we should then live, how we can be better equipped for every good work to present ourselves before you and before the world as those who reflect your glory. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's begin by reading our passage. Just by way of review of the context, Jesus is talking about the kingdom and there is some confusion in our day about what the kingdom is.

By way of review, what is the kingdom? It's helpful if it's a kingdom parable, if we know what kingdom is being spoken of. And as with so much of scripture, there is an immediate meaning for the immediate audience. There is a reality and a truth that pertain to those to whom Jesus was speaking at the time.

But as with Old Testament scripture, as with the Old Testament age that was still underway during the time of the Gospels, as the last seven years of the Old Testament age unfold in the book of Revelation, it is not scripture that directly pertains to us, but it is written for our instruction and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. So we understand that these truths about the kingdom pertain, when talking about the immediate hearing audience, to the kingdom promised to Israel. This is the millennial kingdom.

This is the kingdom that sustained the hope of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Old Testament saints in Hebrews chapter 11, who walked by faith and not by sight. Abraham, who

waited for a city whose founder and builder is God. And the kingdom promises, which really gained specificity, if you will, the details started to become clear in God's covenant promises to King David.

You will have a son who will sit on the throne. Your sons will rule on that throne. The later prophets would say that the tent of David that has fallen down is going to be propped back up.

It is going to be renewed. But it is the kingdom of David. It is the kingdom of Israel.

It is fulfillment of the land promise. God told Abraham, wherever you put your foot, that land is going to belong to you. And it is wider than anything Israel has ever occupied as a nation.

Even in the heyday of David and Solomon, the extent of the land promise to Abraham is greater than that. And those kingdom promises have not yet been fulfilled. We do not have a throne or a son of David on that throne.

So at first blush, when John comes and says, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, Jesus and his disciples follow with the same message. This is only a message presented to the lost sheep of the house of Israel because it is their kingdom, right? So we understand these parables first and foremost related to the hope of the literal millennial kingdom promised to them. We are not promised the millennial kingdom per se.

Our promises in Christ are part of a new and better covenant founded on new and better promises. We do not have the covenant of Sinai. We do not have the covenant of David.

We have the covenant in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not our king. He is our head of all things.

The analogy in scripture for the church is not king and subjects. Remember in the upper room, Jesus begins to shift and to emphasize to his disciples that they are about to become apostles and apostles for the church age. He says, I call you no more servants.

I call you friends. And this change, you find it in John chapter 13 is significant because we, it's easy to get mixed up in observing Old Testament truth and applying it to our New Testament lives. It is pertinent.

It is extremely important for us to understand, but not just to understand what is being said, but also how it applies. So we spent some time looking at what the kingdom is for Israel and what the kingdom is for us. Are we going to be with Christ during the 10 centuries of that kingdom? Yes.

Will some of us be closer and more involved in the rule of the Lord Jesus during that

time? Yes. Will many more of us be distant and in the rear with the gear and not at the point of contact and not at the point of service and function and application? Yes. Sadly, the narrow way that leads to life is found by few.

Remember that? Enter by the narrow gate. Wide is the way, broad is the gate that leads to destruction. This is not hell.

This is not loss of salvation. This is not the lake of fire. This is loss of the quality of life, the substance and fulfillment of future life through blessing and reward, opportunity, potential, closeness to Christ, those overcomer promises.

Wide is the way, broad is the gate that leads to destruction. A lot of people are on that road. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life.

Few there be that find it. Find it. Our parables this morning are about finding.

So they are kingdom parables. We know what the kingdom is. The kingdom is our future hope, not the specific millennial kingdom that is promised to Israel, but our service and opportunity in a higher plane and in a different kind of existence during those 10 centuries, followed by the wonderful blessings, inheritance, opportunity, hopefully citizenship in the new Jerusalem that follows in the kingdom of the Father.

So do the principles pertain? Does the principle of seeking and finding pertain? Is the hope of that future fulfillment something that should motivate us the way the millennial kingdom and the perfection of God's rule in Israel should have motivated Israelite believers and Jewish believers? Absolutely. We have a different destination. We have a different destiny.

We have a different pre destination than Israel in the near term. Ultimately, they and we are all headed for the kingdom of the Father. They are getting there through the millennial kingdom.

Their time with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is in the millennial kingdom. They are going to be resuscitated like Ezekiel's vision, the valley of dry bones, breath enters them. They are covered with sinews and flesh that breath enters and they stand on their feet, a mighty army.

But that is a picture of their resurrection, their resuscitation. If you will, they will not come back for the millennial kingdom in the kind of transformed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. Fully eternity ready bodies that we get at the rapture.

We are the younger son. They are the older son. The elder will serve the younger.

They got the promises first. They had the birthright and the inheritance. But like Esau, most of them sold it for the mess of pottage.

And we are oddly enough to Jacob. We are Jacob. And Jacob becomes his brother.

We inherit first. We receive our eternal bodies first. They will go through the millennial kingdom in fleshly bodies.

But that's why God says, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. This is the promise to resuscitated Israel, those believers in the millennial kingdom. And they will learn what we are learning now, that the law can only be kept.

Obedience and righteousness by faith can only be accomplished in the power of God's spirit. People who figured that out in the Old Testament age got the filling of the spirit. That's how Elijah and Elisha, that's how King David ruled and wrote the Psalms.

The spirit was available. Jesus said this. If you are evil and know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your father give the spirit to those who ask him? It says very plainly that at the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus and Simeon is waiting for the hope of Israel.

The Holy Spirit is talking to him. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he will not die until he has seen the Lord's salvation. So the spirit was available by request, but the universal blessing of his presence and his power that we enjoy in this age will come to Israel.

They will catch up with us in that regard and learn to function in God's presence and God's power in the millennial kingdom. We've already done that, so we are going to be serving at a higher level. I personally think we'll be doing then what the angels do now, and the angels will be moving on to a new assignment.

God is a God of creativity. He's a God of things that we've never even thought of, and his angels have learned a lot being involved in this grand part of God's creative purpose. They've learned what they needed to learn by observation and certainly will have by the end of the tribulation period.

You look at how much angelic involvement there is in the book of Revelation. That is the final exam for angels, unfallen and fallen. The millennial kingdom, it looks to me like we move up into sort of an angelic role because we will be partaking of and commuting to and from, kind of like Jacob's ladder, the heavenly realms to rule and reign with Christ, but not in an earthly capacity.

That's going to be done by the sons of David. He's going to be ruling with a rod of iron, not a rod of heavenly white-robed saints. The rod of iron is earthly, and the government will be earthly here for Israel.

We will be in those more spiritual realms. Then comes the kingdom of the Father, and those who are approved and who are judged worthy will be citizens of the new Jerusalem, just as we who are faithful and are judged worthy will be citizens of the new

Jerusalem. That's why it has got 24 names associated with its gates and walls.

You have the 12 tribes of Israel and you have the 12 apostles. You've got an angel at each gate posted to restrict access. The gates will not be closed, but there are people who will not be allowed in, those who failed to be cleansed and to be restored and renewed are going to be outside.

We've seen this many times. But just to put this in context now, again, anytime you come to a kingdom parable, we have to stop and reflect. There's been a lot of misunderstanding and misinformation about the kingdom and the church's relation to, quote unquote, the kingdom.

When you say the kingdom, which kingdom? What kingdom are you talking about? There is no kingdom right now. This is a huge misunderstanding in a lot of different circles. There is no kingdom right now, unless you want to talk about the overarching rule of God, but that's kind of a given.

You don't need a kingdom paradigm to understand that the sovereign and almighty God is in charge of angels, men, and anything else mentioned and unmentioned. But Jesus is not on a throne. Jesus right now is not on a throne.

He will not be on a throne until his enemies are made his footstool. What does God say to him? The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Have you seen any kingdom where the ruling throne was at the right hand of somebody else's throne? At best, you have something along the lines of the Prince of Wales, who has a small subset, but it's not a kingdom.

The crown comes when the Lord Jesus returns with King of Kings and Lord of Lords on his thigh. He is that in prospect in the same way that we are eternally saved in prospect. We have eternal life as our possession, but we have not entered into it yet.

The Lord Jesus has gone to a distant country as the parable goes to receive a kingdom. And once he receives it, he will come back wearing that crown. But he is seated at the right hand of the father right now.

And it doesn't say anything about him ruling from the right hand of the father. What is he doing at the right hand of the father? What's the confident assertion you can make that scripture claims about what Jesus is doing right now at the right hand of the father? He is making intercession for you and for me and all the rest of his body down here on earth. And that's a full time job.

We need it. But that is the only activity that is ascribed to Jesus in scripture at this time is that he is at the right hand making intercession. He ever lives to make intercession for us.

He will rule. And the first promised kingdom is the first ruled kingdom, and it is the millennial kingdom. Then comes the kingdom of the father.

Who is the king of the kingdom of the father? This is one of those who's buried in Grant's tomb questions. Who is the king of the kingdom of the father? It's the father, right? The final future kingdom. The father is the king and the lamb is the light.

So just to be clear, it's, and it's forgivable and understandable. And it's kind of like when people pray to Jesus, instead of praying to the father, a humble and sincere heart, I have no doubt is heard in heaven, even though you're not praying. According to scripture, prayer is addressed to the father in the name of the son.

And in the power of the spirit, when you hear people playing it, praying to Jesus, they basically haven't really studied prayer and the way Jesus taught us to pray the way that Paul, who records numerous prayers of his own parade, we bow our knees to the father. When you pray, it is our father who art in heaven. So in the same way that people misunderstand prayer, but their hearts in the right place, there are people who are busy working for the kingdom and, and, uh, energized by the kingdom.

And, um, there's a lot of kingdom talk. Well, as long as you understand that you are working in the same way that Abraham dwelt in because he knew there was a coming city and that, and the founder and builder is God. Uh, as long as you understand that whatever quote unquote kingdom work you're involved in is to qualify for presence and service and function in our promised kingdom, which is the kingdom of Christ.

And we are not subjects. We are fellow heirs. He is the firstborn among many brethren.

That's us. We are in him. We are part of him.

We share his inheritance. We share his sonship. We share his priesthood.

We share his destiny in many, many ways. And that is the sense in which we will be involved in the future kingdom promised to Israel. Uh, we will be at his disposal.

We are his body. We who are qualified, uh, will do what he does. And then there is the kingdom of the father.

So having extensively reviewed what the kingdom is, let's look at this parable that talks about it beginning in verse, uh, 44. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid. And for joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

This is a very inscrutable picture at first glance. And oddly enough, one of the keys to understanding this parable is the next parable. So we're going to kind of tackle these together.

Verse 45, again, the kingdom of heaven is like a seeking beautiful pearls who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. So both of these parables talk about finding something valuable. Let's talk about what they have in common, uh, spot the similarities.

If you were going to make a list of what is similar, let's talk about the similarities. Both of these are specifically similes. Kingdom of heaven is like both of them are about a treasure, something that's very valuable.

And that valuable thing is found by a single individual. It wasn't a working party. It's not a road crew finding a dinosaur bone chopping through a hillside.

It's a single man who finds a treasure and he's out by himself. And in some way, the finding of this treasure relates to the kingdom of heaven. Both of them, when they locate the treasure, they are extremely motivated.

The first man sells all that he has so that he can buy the field where this treasure is. The second man so sells all that he has and buys this pearl. So the treasure that is found is worth everything the man has.

That possession is more important than anything. Those are the similarities. What are the differences? What's the first difference you notice between these two men? I mentioned something Thursday night about the seeker sensitive church.

That would give you a clue. One man stumbles onto his treasure completely by accident. The other man is consciously searching.

This man finds a treasure in a field. The other man is a merchant seeking beautiful pearls. And when he finds this one pearl that is above all pearls, he sells all of his other pearl collection, everything else that he's got, and buys this one pearl.

So one man is not seeking. Another man is seeking. Now, how do I know the first man is not seeking? Where is he when he finds the treasure? Somebody else's field.

He's not on his own land because he's got to go sell everything and buy the ground, right? So he's not on his own land. He's taking a shortcut, perhaps. It reminds me of those people I've mentioned it a few times.

It's such an inspiring story about this couple that were walking their Labrador retriever in the hills of California and had done so for many years and owned their property for decades. And they're walking up this little trail up the path, and the golden California sun is beginning to set, and the lady sees a little glint, something shiny over at the base of a tree. They've walked by it a thousand times, but they go over to investigate and come to find out there's this treasure that was hidden in that area.

Somebody had taken a brand new \$20 gold piece every year and collected it, and they were in tin cans and then buried it at the base of this tree. And over time and erosion, the soil had gone away and the can had rusted, and the top coin just happened to catch the sun at the right angle for this lady to see it. And it's called the, I don't know, Something Ridge Hoard, but they auctioned it at Christie's, I think, and it was just millions and millions of dollars.

These people had this treasure the whole time and never knew it. That's something like what happens to this man. He isn't looking for treasure.

It doesn't say he's looking, but he finds it sort of accidentally. And the parable is a little bit uncertain at the beginning. It says, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

A man found this treasure and then hid it. Did he re-hide it or was it visible and he found it and hid it? And the kingdom of heaven is now like the treasure after the man hid it. Is the kingdom of heaven like the treasure that was already hidden and the man found it and then re-buried it, or was it not hidden until he found it and then he buried it? It's a little bit unclear at first blush, but that's the difference.

One man doesn't appear to really be looking. It doesn't say it's like a treasure hunter who found this treasure in another man's field. He's just taking a shortcut.

He's walking across someone's, maybe he's working there. Maybe he's a day laborer. Maybe he's been paid a denarius to work all day in the field.

And as he's reaping and he uproots some grain, suddenly here's this treasure, but he hides it. And then for joy over it, he is excited about it. It has become the central thing in his life.

He sells everything else to obtain it. And again, the merchant who is seeking beautiful pearls, he finds this one of great price and he liquidates all of his other assets and he purchases it in both cases. Another similarity is that there is a purchase involved.

So what can we say about this? Just in the, uh, on the surface, if you will, there is more than one way to discover the kingdom of heaven. One man, it seems to be accidental. The other finds what he has been looking for.

So there are those who are highly motivated and others who just, once they come across it, realize its value. So either way you end up with the treasure, whether you were looking for it initially or not, when it is exposed, when it is in view, value is recognized. I think that's fair to say.

Secondly, both of these men recognize the value of what they have found. They know a treasure when they see it. The merchant knows this pearl when he sees it and he wants

to make it his own.

I want that for myself. I want that more than anything. And this of course needs to be the attitude of believers who are interested in living life in a way that pleases God and that accomplishes his purpose, fulfills the reasons for which the Lord Jesus came to earth and gave himself on our behalf.

Notice thirdly, the treasure already exists. This is not an accumulated hoard by daily work. It's not a picture of laying up for yourself treasure in heaven.

For example, lay up means accumulate. You can go to Romans chapter two and you can either be storing up for yourself inheritance and eternal life, or you can be storing up for yourself wrath and indignation in the day of wrath. Storing up.

This is accumulation over time by a pattern of behavior. This set of parables is an episode. The merchant doesn't accumulate a hoard of pearls.

It's one pearl. The man in the field doesn't start looking at other fields and trying to find other hidden treasures. It's this one.

So it's an episode. It's not talking about a pattern. Not to say that those patterns don't exist and aren't important, but that's not the point of these parables.

These parables are talking about the point of discovery. There is a discovery of this wonderful treasure. The treasure in both cases starts out not being visible.

The first treasure seems to be hidden in the field. I envision this being a man who is doing the kind of reaping we talked about in the wheat parables earlier in this chapter, who instead of reaping with a sickle is pulling the grain up by the roots. That's why the wheat and the tares, he said, let them grow together because if you pull the tares out or if you try to cut the tares, either way you're going to damage the wheat.

Let them grow together. So it's a densely planted field, and as he is wending his way through it, he stumbles across something that is hidden to view until you're right on top of it. Then when he sees it, he digs it up because it's at least partially buried because he hides it again in the field.

There's a bit of a selfish aspect there. He doesn't want anyone else to have it. Something we'll talk about after the break is he doesn't initially own the field.

In normal law, certainly modern law, anything found on a property belongs to the property owner. So you have a little bit of an ethical dilemma if you know that a field is far more valuable than the price you're paying for it. Do you have a responsibility for disclosure to say, I know something about your property and you really shouldn't sell it to me? I know a story about a stamp collector.

In fact, I think it's in a movie where a little child takes the stamp and takes it to a collector. It's one of the rarest stamps in the world. You remember this movie.

It's from the 1950s. It might have Jimmy Stewart or Audrey Hepburn or somebody in it. A little child takes this stamp and takes it to a collector, and the collector gives him a little bit for it.

Then the greatly alarmed people who know what this stamp is worth track down and eventually find the guy. He says, I knew you would be coming. I just wanted the privilege of looking at this stamp.

It's one of the rarest and most beautiful in the world. I would never keep it for that price. I knew what it was worth when he brought it.

I just let him basically sell it to me for safekeeping, knowing that you would come. How fair is it to pay somebody a very modest price when you know something is greatly valuable? That's an element of this parable. Then finally, the pearl merchant, once he goes and buys this pearl of great price, how is he going to be a merchant anymore? He has found the object of his search, so he's not searching, but he's not a merchant anymore.

He doesn't have anything to merchant with. He has got all of his assets in a non-liquid form now. He's holding on to this pearl, and the pearl is everything.

He's not dealing gems on the side or doing anything else. He's put everything he has into this thing that he is going to keep. He's out of the merchanting business.

These are things to think about. As a first point of application, there has been a division of opinion about who the man is. Some people think the man represents the Lord Jesus and that he gives everything he has, i.e. his life on the cross, for the pearl of great price, which is the church.

The church is the pearl of great price. You'll see this quite commonly. I've told you before that my great-grandmother had a paperweight that was one of those poured clear acrylic things.

It looked like the bottom of an aquarium and had a little clamshell and a pearl set in it. Engraved on this paperweight was Christ, the pearl of great price. And so there is the view that if you're seeking and finding, is Christ the pearl of great price, or is the church the pearl of great price? Which is it? It's been interpreted both ways.

The man in the field, because the field is the world in the wheat parables, then the man is seen to be Christ and he's giving everything he has to buy the field because there are some believers in it, and the believers are the treasure, or the church is the treasure. So I think probably all of us, our first instinct might be to think, well, if the sower is the Lord

Jesus, if the field owner is the Lord God, perhaps, or the Lord Jesus who says to his servants, let the wheat and tares grow together, and the son of man is going to send out his angels and take care of what's in the field, then the individual that has appeared in those first parables represented himself, represented the Lord Jesus. So wouldn't we expect that in these parables as well? Well, we're going to pause here and take our break, and when we come back, we'll see how the context helps us understand these parables that Jesus does not interpret for his disciples.

I personally would have been extremely glad if he had done for these what he did for the wheat parables. But if this was the only, if you have to leave and can't catch the second session this morning, what would we conclude? These parables, again, are about the kingdom of heaven, and the Lord Jesus is the king of his coming kingdom because he was fully dedicated to the Father. He sought and fulfilled the Father's will.

He gave his all in that regard. So do these parables reflect the attitude of the Lord Jesus himself about the kingdom? Yes, they do. Is that their complete purpose and intent? Obviously not.

They are for us, and Christ is our example, and as he was fully dedicated and fully motivated by fulfilling the Father's purpose and being qualified to function, in his case, over the kingdom, he gave all that he had without reserve, held nothing back. That was the one and only thing. We should be similarly motivated by our hope of the future and the potential for presence and function and inheritance in those future kingdoms with the Lord Jesus in that thousand-year time of rule over this earth and then the kingdom of the Father in the new heavens and new earth.

How motivated are we? Should we be any less invested, any less devoted to fulfilling everything that the Father has for us in this life and in the next? These parables both picture all in. I'm shoving all of my chips in the center of the table, but it's really not a gamble. I am fully invested.

I'm putting every dime I have into this investment. Both of these individuals do that. That's what Lord Jesus did, and that is what we should do.

No division of interest, no side business, side treasure, side activity, something else going on. The final point of application is you will notice that a lot of kingdom talk right now is, let's all get together. Let's all unite.

Let's cooperate and organize and develop a program. It's going to be kingdom work, a kingdom program. There's a lot of us involved.

How many people are you looking at in these parables? Uno, one, one. It is an individual investment. It is an individual choice.

It is an individual possession. This wasn't a conglomerate. This isn't a corporation that

comes in and buys the field or gets the big pearl.

It's an individual. We individually decide how invested we are going to be in God's kingdom. Let's pause here and take our break.

We're going to have some wonderful, special music. When we come back, we'll look in a bit more detail at what these parables tell us as far as our faith, our practical application in the times in which we live and in the time that remains to us in this life. How should we then live? We'll look at that when we come back from the break.