

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52  
Creekside COB  
July 24, 2005

### **“The Treasure Hunt”**

Have you ever been hit in the gut by the handle of a snow shovel? Hurts, doesn't it? You smoothly push path through the snow when, "THUNK! you hit a joint on the cement slab and are jabbed by the handle. A similar thing happened to a man plowing a field. He is guiding an ox and bearing down on the plow when, THUNK! It hits something under the soil and the handle knocks the wind out of him. He falls to his knees, and as he catches his breath, he scoops away the dirt and uncovers a box. He turns to see if anyone is looking, and opens it. His eyes get as big as saucers. It is full of gold coins and sparkling jewels. "I'm rich! I'm rich!" he says to himself.

Burying the treasure, he runs home, sells everything he's got, and goes straight to the bank for a short-term loan. He goes to the landowner and asks, "How much do you want for that dry, rock-infested field I've been farming? I want to buy it." "If you're after land I can sell you a better field than that one," the landowner says. "I know it sounds silly, but I've become fond that rocky field. Name your price."

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all he has and buys that field. Matthew 13: 44*

It is obvious this man didn't go to Sunday school. If he had, he would have known better than to do such a thing. He would have told the landowner about the treasure, or reported it to the police, whether or not there was a reward for finding it.

This is contrary to our moral code. What he did was wrong. And Jesus said the Kingdom belongs to people like this. He wants us to know that when the treasure is God's Kingdom, our buttoned-

**down, conventional, cautious ways won't cut it. When you are treasure hunting, you've got to seize the moment, and not ask if there is a safety net beneath you. Treasure hunting requires taking risks. You go for broke, buy the field, and reap your reward.**

**Christians should have more in common with Indiana Jones than the Boy Scouts. The Scouts teach safety, first aid, citizenship, and helping little old ladies cross the street. Indiana Jones was kicked out of the Scouts. He told the other boys to throw away their Scout manuals and follow the spirit of adventure. He became a swashbuckling explorer, risking life and limb, fighting Nazi's and hoards of villains who did everything they could to keep Indiana Jones from getting the treasure first, whether it was the lost Ark of the Covenant or the Holy Grail.**

**Jesus said that it is to people like this that the Kingdom belongs--the adventure lovers, the thrill seekers, the risk takers, and the wheeler-dealers who let go of everything they've got to buy a field or a precious pearl. It's God's pleasure to give the treasure to these people-- not those who are tied up and nailed down and locked into normalcy.**

**It is high school reunion season. If you are attending a reunion this summer, I want you to do something. Pay attention to the stories your old classmates tell. First, do you remember the stories? Second, do you admit to being part of them? Third, if what you did weren't against the law, would you do it again? Think about the spontaneity and enthusiasm you had for life back then. How spontaneous and enthused are you now?**

**On my 50th birthday I took John whitewater rafting on an Idaho river that is legendary for the number and size of its rapids. As we put the boat into the 50-degree water of the Lochsaw River, outfitted in wet suits, life vests, and helmets, I was in a contemplative mood. "You know you could die doing this, don't you? You could get thrown overboard and be washed to the ocean." When did I last update my will? I thought about the beneficiaries on my life insurance policies. I wondered what I**

was thinking when I booked the white water trip six months earlier from the comfort of my Lazy-Boy recliner.

John sat across from me, giddy with excitement. "This is going to be so cool!" he said. "Won't it be something if we flip over in a class 5 rapids?" I said to him, "Shut up and paddle when the man tells you."

Time has a way of stifling ambition and increasing inhibition. Something happens to us when we get ourselves degreed and credentialed. We settle down, marry, and have a few kids. We take on a 30-year mortgage, work like crazy so the kids can go to college and we can retire in Florida. We get stuck in the rut of routine-meatloaf on Tuesday, watch the Cubs and drink a beer; catch re-runs of "I Love Lucy." Take the kids to soccer practice and piano lessons. Change your oil every 3,000 miles. Mow the lawn. Bowling league on Wednesday. Golf on Saturday. Church on Sunday. Start over on Monday. No wonder we catch ourselves counting the ticks of the clock and humming the old Peggy Lee song, "Is That All There Is?"

Someone said, "If we're not careful, we will end up sacrificing adventure for predictability." There was a man who lived in the same house for seventy years. One day he surprised everyone by moving into the house next door. Reporters from the local papers thought this was interesting, and asked the man why, after all those in years in one house, he had moved. With a self-satisfied smile he said, "I guess it must be the gypsy in me."

Suppose someone walked in to church and handed out maps to everyone. On it is a dotted line on it that leads to a big "X." He says, "There is a field a little north of here on County Road 15. Go out there with this map, follow the directions closely, and you will find a chest full of money at the base of a big oak tree." I can imagine the kids shouting, "What are we waiting for? Let's go and start hunting!" I can also imagine many urging restraint. "Now wait just a minute. How do you know he's telling the truth? And even if there is money buried in that field, that's private property. There are, "NO TRESPASSING" signs all over the place. Suppose the money belongs to a drug dealer? He'll see

**your picture in the paper and the story of how you found his money-- then you'll be in capital "T" trouble. And even if you can keep the money, you'll have to pay capital gains taxes on it."**

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**But suppose the guy passing out the maps is Jesus. Would you run for the cars with the kids, or be like those who say, "Sure, I'll follow you, Jesus, but first let me say good-bye to Mom and Dad. Let me bury my father. I have to give a two-week notice at work. First let me finish a big remodeling project and then find a buyer for my house. I've got to run to the bank and cash in some CDs. Can I wait until Charlie Weiss turns the Notre Dame football program around?"**

**If we're not careful, we can find ourselves living a life of stifling sameness. Anthony DeMello said, "The kind of danger we are ready for is the kind we can face from a safe distance." When Jesus invited people to be his disciples he didn't sugarcoat the prospects. He told them what they could expect. Their families would turn their backs on them. Their friends would disappear. They wouldn't be welcome in the synagogues. It would be tough on them. The path he chose would cost him his life. He never promise it would be easy, but he did promise it would be worth losing the world for it.**

**And Peter left his fishing nets. And Matthew left a stack of IRS FORM 1040's. And untold numbers have dropped what they were doing to find the treasure we call the way, the truth, and the life.**

**Several years ago the church board had a retreat at the Fatima Center at Notre Dame. We had a wonderful leader in Father Bill Simmons. He was a living treasure chest of stories. I remember how he began the retreat. He asked us to imagine an eight-inch wide plank extending across the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. He had us picture ourselves standing at one end of the plank, the wind whistling around us, the cars looking like tiny specks hundreds of feet below. Then he posed**

this question. "Is there anything on the other side that would get you to walk the plank across the divide?"

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All I Want is Everything is the title of an autobiography by Marian Preminger. In the end, everything that mattered is what she got. She was born in Hungary in 1913 into an aristocratic family, surrounded by the finest of everything. She went to school in Vienna, married and divorced soon afterward. Later she met and married the famous German film director, Otto Preminger. He took her to Hollywood where she soon was immersed in what could best be described as decadent behavior. She gained the reputation as being the wildest of the wild in Hollywood.

Moving to Paris she continued the descent into debauchery when she met a man named Albert Schweitzer. She immediately sensed something very different about him, and told him, "All I want is everything." Schweitzer returned to Africa, and Marian wrote to him begging to go there to do something for someone other than herself. He invited her to come. In Africa she became a servant, scrubbing floors, bathing emaciated bodies, and feeding lepers. She wrote: "I became a new person and free for the first time in my life; free and alive!"

God give us the guts to stake all that we have and are on His treasure. God grant us the wisdom to tell the difference between false treasure and the real deal. God spare us from choosing comfort over risk and routine over the adventure of following Jesus. God give us so much trust that we will buy the field, walk the plank, and know the joy of being a citizen of His Kingdom.