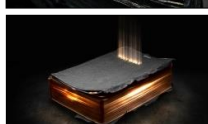


Missing Treasure

Digging the Hoard of the Lord

August 14, 2022

Today we're learning how to hunt the hoard of the Lord.



Have you ever discovered treasure? When I was 13, Pops asked me to dump a wheelbarrow full of weeds, out by the slough. I obeyed. With a bad attitude. Until I dumped the weeds and saw a \$20 bill half in the ground. Did *my* attitude change! In 1975 \$20 was like \$85 *today*. Didn't *earn* it. Didn't *deserve* it. But I knew to *seize* a good thing when I *saw* it! God's kingdom is like that.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a *man found* it, he hid it again, [as the former hider had] and *then* in his *joy* went and sold all he had and *bought* that field. Again, [on the other hand] the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant [who was] looking for fine pearls. When he *found* one of great value, he [likewise] went away and sold everything he had and bought it. – Matthew 13:44-46 NIV

How are these guys *different*? Because they *are*. **The seeker bought the treasure itself;** but **the stumbler bought the field where it was hidden.**

In Jesus' day, most people buried their stash. And after generations of warfare, deaths, and failing memories, everybody knew *somebody* who, while working in a field, had unexpectedly unearthed a treasure trove! This is Nadine Ross, a first-time, one-month volunteer, at an amateur dig in a Jerusalem parking lot. Three weeks in, she found one of the greatest coin hoards *ever* discovered in Jerusalem! And Nadine's group found this 2000-year-old gold, emerald, and pearl earring. The Romans in Jesus' day prized pearls above all other jewels.

Now, the man who "bought that field" took joy in owning the means to his hidden treasure. Seems **he preferred having it to handling it**. Like *us* and God's Word. But that *pearl-seeker* "bought IT" (the treasure *itself*). And when I found the Lord, I bought a Bible with great intentions of mining its many buried treasures. But, they mostly remained closed and concealed. **I settled for the joy of possessing something that held the hidden treasure.** But, Proverbs says that wisdom will enter your heart ...

If you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; ["For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:21)] yes ... If you seek [wisdom] as *silver*, and search for [wisdom] as for hidden treasures; [rather than letting it stay *buried in your Bible*] *then* [since "he who seeks finds" (Mt 7:8)] you will understand the fear of the Lord, and *find* the knowledge of God. [Cuz guess who buried it six chapter later] – Proverbs 2:1-5 NKJ

"I, wisdom, dwell with *prudence*, [shrewdness] and find out knowledge and discretion. [So hear this] The fear of the Lord is to *hate evil*;" [So that's how wisdom defines "the fear of the Lord". Wow. We just found a *pearl of the knowledge of God!*] – Proverbs 8:12-13 NKJ

[Because] Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, *and* the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure. – Isaiah 33:6 NKJ

This entire vision has become for you like the words of a sealed scroll. ... Their fear of Me [the Lord] is just a human command that has been memorized, – Isaiah 29:11-13 CEB

¹² "But where shall wisdom be found? [asks Job] And where is the place of understanding? ¹³ Man does not know its worth ... ¹⁸ the price of wisdom is *above pearls*. [and] ... ²¹ It is *hidden* from the eyes ... [but] ²³ God understands the way to it, and He knows its place. ... ²⁸ And He said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, [i.e. *hating evil*] that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'" – Job 28:12-28 ESV

[For] "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" – Matthew 16:25-26 NIV

Your gold and silver are corroded. [And] Their corrosion will testify against you ... [because] You have *hoarded* [the wrong kind of] *wealth* in the last days. – James 5:3 NIV



Jesus is like a patient counselor on a hoarder show: "Can we let the old newspapers go? No? How about the ones from the bird cage? No? Do they bring you *joy*? No? Do they bring you *grief*? Yes? So maybe can we let the *wet* ones go ... for *now*?" Okay, now I'm ready to answer the question: "What can a man give in exchange for his soul?" Wet cage liner! Think of it: **God gladly trades His treasure for our trash.** Now *that's* grace!

Yes, [writes Paul] everything else is *worthless* when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded *everything* else, [that got in the way of true gain] counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ – Philippians 3:8 NLT

I've told you about how I prayed, for several years, that the Lord would help me to *enjoy* reading His Word – *desire* it *even* – and how I forced myself to read His Word while waiting for Him to answer my prayer. Which He certainly, eventually did. So much so, I can truly say:

¹¹ Your Word I have treasured in my heart ... ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. ... ⁷² The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver *pieces*. – Psalm 119:11, 14, 72 NAS

Trouble is, we settle for the field. Which is why we need to be shaken – and awakened. Because **finding those pearls of wisdom of the knowledge of God requires some serious ongoing seeking.** I was oh-so satisfied with my twenty ... till a month later, when a man who stumbled across a twenty in the very same spot ... *dug*. That wasn't his name; it's what he did. Because, unlike "dug" I didn't. **I had sadly settled, while this guy sought.**



And when I found out that there was more – much, much more – I suddenly wasn't so satisfied with the corroded, wet \$85 I'd *ignorantly* settled for. Cuz there were *bundles!* Which, to be honest, looked more like that second picture. Which, let's face it, looks a lot like that hoarder's house. But nonetheless, that regret stung and clung. The hoard was in the wall of house that was demolished, and the foundation came to us as fill material. We had to call the police. But nobody claimed it. So "dug" got to keep it.

At the end of a very big, action packed day, Jesus asks His disciples if they have *any questions* about *any* of His teachings, or *anything* regarding *any* of His reactions and responses.

"Have you understood *all* these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." – Matthew 13:51 ESV

But they *hadn't*. They only had a \$20. (Mk 9:32 Lk 9:45; Jn 12:16) They're tired; overwhelmed; afraid to look dumb; and likely leery of a lengthy answer. *Whatever* the reason, **they either assume they do understand everything; or they assume they know as much as they need to know.** Either way, it's a dumb assumption. When God says "Any questions?" come up with *something!*

And He said to them, "Therefore [since you lack *no* understanding] every scribe [scholar of the OT] who has been *trained* for the kingdom of heaven [like you] is like a *master* of a house, who brings out of *his treasure* what is *new* and what is *old*." – Matthew 13:52 ESV

Burn! Even if they understood *everything*, which they *obviously* didn't, it doesn't excuse 'em. Cuz it's not enough to lean on *old findings*; we gotta keep digging God's depths for *new* riches.

"I will show you what he is like who comes to Me and hears My Words and puts them into practice. He is like [ol' dug] a man *building* a house, who *dug* down *deep* and laid the foundation on *rock*." – Luke 6:47-48 NIV

... which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, [stuff that's *treasured*; or] wood, hay or straw, [stuff that *burns*] his work will be shown for what it is, because ... the *fire* will test the *quality* – 1 Corinthians 3:11-13 NIV

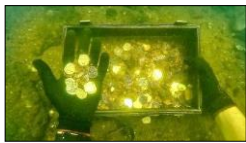
Burn! **Only the house of treasure will stand the test of fire.** On Christ the solid Rock I stand, to the degree I dig into His *Word* and put it into *practice*. Cuz **those who don't practice His Word, don't trust Him.** And **those who don't trust Him, just don't know Him.** And those who don't know Him haven't *dug* for Him as for *wisdom*. Cuz they just don't know the *worth* nor *value* of:

Christ Jesus, who became for us *Wisdom* – 1 Corinthians 1:30 NKJ

[So] Let the *Word* of Christ [the End of Wisdom] dwell in you richly – Colossians 3:16 NIV

[Cuz, after all] You are God's *field* – 1 Corinthians 3:9 NKJ

Now, I may have given you the wrong impression. I don't really like the *Bible*.



The way I talk, you probably think I'm really into it; but I've never been into it as a scholarly pursuit or parsing out the grammar and such. I went to *film* school. I'm into *action*. **I respect it, appreciate it, rely on it, and see it as the second greatest gift ever given to man; but I don't worship a book** – not even the one written by *God*. I worship *Him* alone. **Bibliolatry is the idolizing, venerating, or worshipping of the Bible more than the Lord.**

Years ago, I went to a car salvage auction, and the auctioneer suddenly stopped, mid-sentence, to remove a Bible he saw on a dashboard, telling us it would be disrespectful to auction a Bible. Now, at the time, I was using one as a sanding block. **Sad Bibles suffer veneration and adoration rather than dilapidation;** you know, from highlighters, margin scribbles, Post-it Notes, and general, faithful wear-and-tear. Plus those *tiny* New Testaments make *great* sanding blocks. *And* it's a great way to keep one covertly handy around blue-collar co-workers. You see, I'm not *totally* sacrilegious.

Some of you genuinely love the Word of God in and of itself, because after years of embracing, testing, and proving it's truths and promises, you can see it as the precious gift it is. But for those who don't, in order to get to where they got, **we gotta begin to see it as the means rather than the end. The field-man bought the means;** whereas **the pearl-merchant bought the goal.** I'm also not into geography or oceanic charts or scuba diving. But if I was given the confirmed location of an incredible hoard of sunken treasure, I'd sure be into *all* of it! As a *means*. In the same way, **God's Word isn't an end in and of itself;** it's a *means* to the *greatest Treasure* of *all*.

David's satisfaction with the means didn't distract *him* from seeking the End (with a capital "E").

[Because] "[I am] the End," says the Lord, – Revelation 1:8 NKJ

One thing I have desired of the Lord, *that* will I *seek* ... to behold the beauty of the Lord
... I would have lost *heart*, unless I had believed that I would see – Psalm 27:4, 13 NKJ

Maybe you don't treasure it yet, cuz you see it as an end in and of itself (reading, studying, parsing out scuba diving); but **it's time for you to come to see that it's not a what but a Who.**

[Christ Jesus] brought *life* and *immortality* to light *through* the *Gospel*. And *of* this *Gospel*
... I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, – 2 Timothy 1:11-12 NIV

Not "what". The Bible isn't a reference book (though it can be used as one);

I rejoice at Your Word as one who finds *great Treasure*. – Psalm 119:161-162 NKJ

Can you imagine how many times I bitterly asked myself why I didn't even *think* to dig?! But I knew the answer: **I was too satisfied with too little till too late.** So please, take it from an idiot, and learn from one of my greatest regrets. **Don't settle.**

Cuz I'm not about to make that same mistake with God's Word. **You dig?**