



THE NONCONFORMIST

THE **PUZZLING** STORIES
OF JESUS

2



YES, NO + MAYBE

1. I'm so good at hiding my valuables, that I often forget where I put them!
2. I frequently find money or valuables that other people have lost.
3. God needs us to search for His Kingdom like treasure hidden in a field.
4. If you are unwilling to sell all of your possessions, you will never find the Kingdom of Heaven.
5. The world belongs to the devil.

DIG DEEPER

● **READ Matthew 13:44-46** (NLT)

Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

44 "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.

45 "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. 46 When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!"

✚ **44 The Kingdom of Heaven** - Behind the Greek word for kingdom (*basileia*) lies the Aramaic term *malkut*, which Jesus may have spoken in this parable. *Malkut* refers primarily not to a geographical area or realm nor to the people inhabiting the realm but, rather, to the activity of the king himself, his exercise of sovereign power. The idea might better be conveyed in English by an expression such as kingship, rule, or sovereignty.

● What other parables can you think of that contain the phrase, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like"? What is the "Kingdom" in those parables?

✚ **44 a treasure** - In the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, some incorrectly identify the treasure as eternal life. In this view the man who sells all is seen as a seeking sinner buying his own eternal life by committing his life to Christ in radical, obedient discipleship. The problem with this interpretation is that the Bible consistently teaches that a person is born again, not by his sacrifice but by the Lord's. No one must think he can pay any part of the redemption price himself. The treasure is represented as a lost and unclaimed possession.

● What challenges do you see if we interpret the "treasure" as eternal life, and something we need to invest in?

DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

✦ **44 a man discovered** - In the flow of this chapter, it seems best to understand this to be a reference to the Messiah finding Israel, God's "treasured possession" (Ex. 19:5; Ps. 135:4). One reason Jesus came into the world was to redeem Israel, so that He could be the One who sold all He had (Phil. 2:5-8) in order to purchase the treasure.

● How does this parable hit you differently by picturing the "man" as Jesus, instead of placing yourself in that role?

✦ **44 hidden in a field** - The practice of hiding great treasure, such as gold and jewels, was far more frequent in ancient days, especially in the East, due to war, changes of rulers, and the like. Some report that men of wealth often divided their wealth into three parts: one for doing business, another part converted into precious stones with which to flee, if necessary, a third part to be buried in a safe place. One is reminded of the Copper Scroll found in a cave at Qumran (3Q15), which gives directions for the recovering of caches of gold, silver, and other precious items. Virgil, Aen. 1:358-9, refers to 'ancient treasure in the earth, a hoard of gold and silver known to none'.

✦ **44 In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.** - The field, not the treasure, is bought. When anyone found treasure like this, the legal position appears to have been that the finder was entitled to keep it. But acquiring legal title to such a find was not always straightforward. If the finder was an employee, his employer could argue that he was acting as his agent, especially if the employer happened to own the land where the find was made. And if he was his employer's agent in "lifting" the treasure, then the treasure belonged to the employer. This will be the reason the man hid the treasure instead of "lifting" it straightaway; if he "lifted" it before the field was his, it might be argued that when he did the "lifting" he was acting as the owner's agent. By buying the land before "lifting" the treasure, he removed all possibility of dispute.

● What does it tell you about God that He would give up *everything* in order to buy back the world [field] from the devil?

● What does it tell you about God that He would be *excited* to do so?

✦ **45 a merchant on the lookout** - Two words are used here for "merchant." An emporos [ἐμπορος] is a wholesale merchant, one who travels and imports, and anthropos [ἄνθρωπος] is the additional clarification of "man," like our "merchantman"; the opposite is kapelos [κάπηλος], a retailer or a peddler. A merchant was seen more as a collector than a peddler.

✦ **45 choice pearls** - 'Pearls' (see on Matt. 7:6) were more valued by the ancients than they are by us, and several commentators have suggested that pearls once held the place that diamonds do now. Pearls are uniquely formed. "Its formation occurs because of an irritation in the tender side of an oyster. There is a sense in which the church was formed out of the wounds of Christ and has been made possible by His death and sacrifice" (John F. Walvoord, Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come, p. 105).

● What does it mean to you that God values you more than diamonds?

✦ **46 he sold everything he owned and bought it!** - Jesus is not saying that a man may buy his way into the kingdom; that would fly in the face of all his teaching. The problem this parable addresses is the value of the citizens of "the kingdom" to Christ. The parable explains that they are of supreme value. Jesus is the one who gave all He had for the buried treasure in the field. He gave His life for His own creation (1 Pet 1:18-19). His sacrifice shows how precious to Christ are "the kingdom" subjects (1 Cor 6:20; 2 Cor 8:9). What is the value of the citizens of the kingdom to Christ? They are of supreme value. Just as the businessman gave "all that he had" for a valuable pearl, so Jesus gave all He had (His life) for His own.

● What does this tell you about God's character?



MY PRAYER...

1. How am I allowing God to buy me out of the world?
2. What am I currently doing to try to "buy" the Kingdom of Heaven?"
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?