

Treasure Hunters

Matthew 13:44-46

Luke 14:25-35

Theme Statement: To be a follower of Jesus, we have to be willing to sacrifice **everything**.

Introduction

*You know what I think? I think we don't play enough games in church.
So let's play a game this morning.*

Has anyone ever played tribond?

Tribond is a game where you are given three things that have something in common and you have to try to guess how they are connected.

Well, I thought we would play a little round of tribond today to introduce the message.

So I will give you 3 movie titles and you tell me the one word that links them together.

And just to make it easy, I will give you the number of letters in the word that connects them.

— — — — —

Are you ready?

Here they are:

Raiders of the Lost Ark

Fool's Gold

Pirates of the Caribbean: *The Curse of the Black Pearl*

So the question is - what do these 3 movies have in common? (give first letter if have to)

Answer:

Treasure. The link is treasure.

These are 3 movies that are on Factoidz.com's list of best treasure hunting movies.

One of my favourites on their list is called National Treasure.

Has anyone ever seen it?

National Treasure is a movie about an historian named Benjamin Gates who dedicates his life to finding the lost treasure of the Knights templar.

Gates comes from a long line of treasure hunters, and ever since he was a boy, he was obsessed with finding this treasure,ⁱ

which legend said was hidden by the Freemasons, during the early years of the United States.

It was a treasure that was described as the greatest fortune known to man, and it's estimated value was ten billion dollars.

According to the back cover, National Treasure is a trilling, edge of your seat adventure.

Heart pounding chases, close calls, and the FBI turn Gates' quest into a high stakes crime caper and the **most exciting treasure hunt you've ever experienced**.

At least until you watch National Treasure II: Book of Secrets.
But that is for another sermon.

Benjamin Gates dedicated his life to finding this treasure.
His whole life revolved around it.
And he was willing to sacrifice everything for it.

And I was wondering,

Is there something in our life like that?
Is there something that we treasure so much, that we would sacrifice everything for it?

Well, there are a couple of passages in the Bible that talk about treasure and about sacrifice.
And I would like to reflect on these passages with you this morning.

The Treasure

The first is Matthew 13:44-46.
Matthew 13 says this:

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure.

What does he mean by that?

What is this kingdom of heaven?
And how is like a treasure?

Well, Eerdmann's Dictionary of the Bible defines the Kingdom of heaven as:

The realm ruled by God.

And so, the Kingdom of heaven is the area where God is fully in charge, and fully present.
It is the time and the space where God is totally in command and everything in life revolves around him.

It is what we call heaven, but there is more to it than that.
It is heaven on earth.

It is a new and improved world where everything is right between God and his creation.
Where everything and everyone is in perfect **harmony** with the creator. Perfect harmony.

One of our students shared with me the other day that for one of her music assignments at Queen's,
she had to design a fugue.

Do you know what a fugue is?

At first I thought she was going to create a fight between relatives, but that I am told is a feud.

A fugue is a musical piece that has one theme, but this theme is repeated by a number of different voices.

Usually it begins with one voice, then another voice echoes it, and then another.

Eventually there are a whole bunch of voices that blend together to form one harmonious sound. Many voices blending together perfectly in one song and creating harmony.

Well the kingdom of heaven is a lot like that.

In God's kingdom, every part of creation is joined together in perfect harmony. Every single piece fits together perfectly with each other and with God and it is focussed on one thing – worshipping God.

And the result is a thing of beauty.

Can you imagine what that would be like?

But how is that like a treasure?

Well, for something to be called a treasure, it has to be valuable. And for something to be valuable it has to be special.

It has to offer something different, something unique, something extraordinary.

Like Gold, for example.

On today's market, Gold has a value of about:ⁱⁱ

- \$1800 / oz (\$1 808.01 / oz)
- or
- Just over \$58 000 per kilogram (\$ 58 128.97 /1 kilogram)

But compare gold with sugar.

Sugar only costs:

4 cents /oz
\$1.25 /kg (walmart.ca)

Gold is 46 503 times more valuable than sugar.
And that makes gold a lot sweeter.

Why is gold so much more valuable?

Because it is harder to obtain.

It is more difficult to acquire.

It offers something unique.

Well in the same way, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, because it offers something that nothing else can offer.

It is so valuable that it changes lives forever, and opens people up to a new world.

Science Fiction writer [H. G. Wells](#) thought a lot about new worlds.

And he once said,

(The doctrine of)... the Kingdom of Heaven, (which was the main teaching of Jesus), is (certainly) one of the most revolutionary (things) that ever stirred and changed human thought.

It is revolutionary, because if there is a kingdom, there is hope.

And who doesn't want hope today?

If we were to measure the value of hope on today's current market,
I am sure that it would far exceed the value of gold.

Because the world that we live in right now, is a world that desperately needs hope.
It lacks perfection and it is missing harmony.

And instead, our world is full of injustice, and suffering, and evil.

It is a world that faces one global crisis after another.

In November, we held our annual Geneva Lecture on campus.
And this year we invited Christian economist Bob Goudzwaard to come to speak to us.

His talk was entitled,

Peeling the Onion, World Problems and Their Deeper Dimensions

And Bob challenged us to think about the state of the world and about huge global problem areas such as:

- The Economy
- Poverty
- And the environment

And you know, when you look at these areas, things don't look so good.

But Bob challenged us to see that if we begin to follow the ways of the kingdom, there is hope.
The Kingdom offers hope in troubled times.

It offers hope to a world that went horribly wrong.

The book of Genesis tells us that at the beginning of time,

God made an amazing creation.
It was perfect.

There was no injustice, no suffering, no evil.

But then something happened.

Something destroyed the peace and the harmony.

Chapter 2 tells us that our ancestors Adam and Eve made a conscious choice to disobey the creator.

They broke away from God and in so doing, they broke everything.

As a result of their decision, evil infected every part of creation.

And now our world is messed up.

But the good news of the Kingdom, is that God is going to fix our damaged world.

He will restore the brokenness of creation.

- He will restore the brokenness that can be found on a global scale.
- And he will restore the brokenness that can be found deep within each one of us.

In those dark places of our lives that no one sees but God.

God is going to fully redeem his creation.

And in fact he has already started.

The Bible teaches us that Christ came to usher in this Kingdom, this realm of harmony and peace with God and creation.

At Christmas we celebrated the hope that Jesus brings to the world.

And the book of Matthew tells us that the message that Jesus brought with him was that:

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt 3:2 - esv)
Through Jesus the kingdom has begun to take place.
The song has started to play.
And voices are joining the song.

It is far from complete and it has not reached its climax.

But the kingdom is beginning, even now.

And it all starts with Jesus.

Jesus came to restore harmony with God and creation,
He came to us,
Because only God could fix what was broken.

Only God could make things right.

And Jesus came to show us the way to this new world order.

To find the Kingdom which is now coming, we have to follow Jesus.

We have to come in line with the ways of Christ.

He is the only one who can bring hope, and healing that will last.

And he can redeem everything and everyone.

To me that is more valuable than anything else I could ever imagine.

No other treasure offers anything like Jesus.
No other treasure offers more.

But no other treasure demands more either.

When the treasure hunters in Matthew 13 found their prize,

They went away and sold everything they had and bought it.

They gave up everything for it.

The Sacrifice

In Luke 14 Jesus tells us that there is a cost to the treasure he offers.
There is a price to joining his kingdom and to following his way.

And that is our second passage that I would like us to reflect on today. █ (treasure/rich)
It is on page ___ in your pew bibles.

Luke 14:25-33 tell us:

The Cost of Being a Disciple

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

³¹ "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

In Luke, Large crowds appeared to be following Jesus, but appearances were deceiving.

And Jesus challenged their motivation and he challenged their commitment.
And he used that word again, "everything".

³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up **everything** you have cannot be my disciples.

Now everything kind of sounds like a lot to me.

And I am not sure I am comfortable with that word.

I would have been more comfortable with Jesus saying,

...those of you who do not give up **most things** you have, cannot be my disciples.

I would love it if Jesus had said,

I know you are busy. You have things on the go.

You have a young family.
You have a lot of responsibilities.
And things cost a lot of money these days.

So you know what.
Just give up **most things** for me, or maybe even just **some things**.
Show me that I am pretty important to you.
Just let me play a part in your life, that is all I want.
Just send me a little money, think about me every so often, and try to work me into your schedule.
I wouldn't want you to be uncomfortable in any way.

But Jesus didn't say that.

He said,... those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

In his book *Crazy Love*, Francis Chan writes:

It's easy to fill ourselves up with other **things** and then give God whatever is left (91)
(but) God wants our best, deserves our best, and demands our best. (90)
Jesus' call to commitment is clear: He wants all or nothing. (85)

Let me ask this question:

- Are we serving leftovers to God?

God wants our best and in fact, he wants everything.

There is a story of a pastor who was in charge of a small church.
The church didn't have a lot of money and neither did the pastor.
But the outside of the church desperately needed a paint job.
And the pastor felt convicted by God to do something about it.

So one day the pastor decided that this job couldn't wait any longer, and he was going to have to trust God to provide.

So he went down to the hardware store, bought 2 gallons of paint, and then began to paint the church.

But it wasn't long before he noticed that he was quickly running out of paint.
It was going much quicker than he expected.

And so he thought about his situation for a moment and then he had an idea.

He decided to thin down the paint.

He added a little water and mixed it together,
and sure enough he had enough paint to cover the outside of the church.

Well that night, it poured rain, and in the morning when the pastor went back to the church, he immediately discovered that all the paint that he had watered down had washed away.

The pastor was so discouraged that he cried out to God and said

- What am I supposed to do now!!!!

And a voice from heaven responded with these words:

- Repaint, and thin no more.

Do we water down our devotion to God?

Jesus wants our best, he wants everything.

And as I was studying our text in Luke, I think that there are 3 "things" in particular that "everything" implies.

3 things.

1. Love

First of all, "everything" means that Jesus wants our love.

Verse 26 says,

²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple.

This was a pretty shocking statement that Jesus made.

What did he mean when he said we must hate our father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters?

Well, Jesus was not giving permission for teenagers to rebel against their parents, and spouses and siblings to fight with each other.

Jesus was assuming that we love our parents, and we love our spouses and we love our children and we even love our siblings.

And what Jesus was doing, was taking what should be the greatest examples of earthly love, and then saying:

When you compare your love for me with your love for them,
You shouldn't even be able to classify them as the same thing.

You love for them should be nothing compared to the love you have for me.

Think about this for a moment.

Who is the person that you love the most on earth?
(do you have someone in mind?)

Do you love Jesus more?

If you had to choose between Christ and them – who would you choose?
And in fact do you love Jesus 10 billion times more?

That's the kind of love that Jesus wants.

2. Life (style)

I think the second thing that "everything" means is our lifestyle.
Our way of life on earth.

Benjamin Gates didn't find the treasure he was looking for by accident.
He didn't just stumble upon it while he was doing something else.
He sought after it with all he had.
His life revolved around it.

The choices he made in life all had to do with what was most important to him – his treasure.

In our Luke passage, Jesus tells 2 parables.

The first is about someone who wants to build a tower.

²⁸ "Suppose one of you wants to build a **tower**. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

Before the person actually builds the tower, they first sit down and think hard about what they are going to do.

The second parable is about a king who is about to go to war.

³¹ "Or suppose a **king** is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

Before the king actually goes to war, he sits down and thinks hard about what he is up against.

Both characters ask themselves the question – do I really want to do this?
Is this really worth it? Because if it do, there will be a cost involved.

This past semester, a number of groups in our church have been gathering together to do a study called - Not a fan.

In this series Pastor Kyle Idleman says that there is a difference between following Jesus and just being a fan of him.

He says,

Fans admire Jesus, but followers are devoted to him.
Followers are willing to sacrifice.
And they realize that a relationship with Jesus is all inclusive.

You don't obtain the treasure by sitting on the sidelines.
The way of Jesus demands that we become totally dedicated followers who are willing to sacrifice.

And that means that all we do and all that we say and all that we think is dedicated to Christ.

Does our lifestyle match up with our decision to follow Jesus?
Does how we live reflect our commitment to Christ and his Kingdom?
Or are there areas that are off limits for God?

God doesn't just want something, he wants everything.

3. Life (itself)

And this leads us to third thing that everything implies - and that is Life itself.

Our passage says:

²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—**yes, even life itself**—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ **And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.**

When Jesus said this, it must have really made his disciples' heads spin and their hearts sink.

This term "carry their cross" meant that their dedication for Christ would require that they be willing to go as far as a very painful death.

And for all but one of the early disciples that is exactly what happened. They sacrificed their life and they died for Christ.

There are many places in the world where followers of Jesus make a similar sacrifice. For them just to call themselves a Christian puts their lives at risk.

Can you imagine what it would be like to live that way?

And yet maybe, it would be better for us.

Wes Stafford, the head of Compassion International, once shared a story of how he met a pastor of a church in Africa that was being heavily persecuted.

Wes told the pastor that he and thousands of North American Christians were praying for them.

The pastor responded by saying – thank you, we are praying for you too.

Wes was a bit puzzled and he said, what do you pray for us for?

And the pastor said,

Our suffering is severe and awful, but it is nowhere near as serious as your suffering.

Here we pray all day long because we need God in our lives, if we are going to get as far as today's sunset.

But we are told that it is possible in the West for a follower of Christ to not pray all day long. And some people tell me that they can go all week without praying.

Here, we risk our lives to gather in worship, but we have heard that many Christians would rather go on a picnic on a nice day than go to church.

The pastor said that they had one copy of Scripture that they had to rip up so that everyone in the congregation could read it.

But they heard that in the West, people have as many bibles as they need, and yet many would go all day without reading it.

And the pastor asked Wes – is this possible?

And Wes paused for a moment and then he had to admit, that yes, this is possible.

And moved by all that the pastor had said, Wes asked him to please keep praying for us in the West.

Is it possible that we are too comfortable for our own good?
Is it possible that we are holding too tightly to the pleasures of this world?
Is it possible that we need to surrender life itself to Jesus?

The apostle Paul wrote:

– for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:20-22

Conclusion

Following Jesus demands everything.

It demands our:

Love
Lifestyle
Life itself

Now I am not sure how you are feeling about all of this right now.
And when I look at this list of things, I have to tell you, I feel a little overwhelmed.

And I will be totally honest with you this morning.
I have dedicated my life to following Jesus, but there is no way that I even come close to achieving these “things”.

And I am thankful that we are not saved by accomplishing these things.
Because if that was the case, then no one could be saved.

Our salvation depends on what Christ has done and it depends on our receiving his gift and choosing to follow him.

But following Jesus, means learning to sacrifice everything for Christ.
The way of Jesus, is the way of sacrifice.

Christ expects that we give up everything for him.
But he also expects that we will never be able to do this on our own.
We can only begin to achieve these things through what God does in our lives.

The other day at Grad study, someone put it well, when he said,
It is not about our ability, it is about our availability. (Paul H)
Following Jesus is not about being perfect, but it is about the journey to perfection.

Scripture tells us that one day, Christ will return and he will make everything and everyone perfect.
He will fully usher in his Kingdom.

And until that happens, it is our responsibility to passionately pursue Christ and his ways.

And that begins with a desire to sacrifice everything for the treasure that is ours in Christ.

God gave us this promise,

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jer 29:13)

But the question that we must ask ourselves is:

What treasure will we seek?
What will we dedicate our life to?

My prayer is that we will seek first Christ and his kingdom.

God's promise is that it will be the most exciting treasure hunt we have ever experienced.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the greatest treasure that we could ever seek.
You offer more than any earthly fortune and we want to dedicate our life to following you.

We want to sacrifice everything for you and your Kingdom.

But you know us well Lord.

You know where we are holding back.
You know the areas where we are giving you leftovers.
You know the places where we don't want to give you complete control.

Today Lord Jesus, in your strength we surrender all to you.

And we pray,
Help us to grow in our love for you.
Help us to make the lifestyle changes that are needed.
Help us to let go of our tight hold on life, and to release our very existence into your hands.

We give everything to you Jesus.
In your strength and in your name we pray.

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

I surrender all,
I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Now I feel the sacred flame.

Oh, the joy of full salvation!
Glory, glory to His name!

ⁱ National Treasure – back cover

ⁱⁱ http://www.24hgold.com/english/gold_silver_prices_charts.aspx?money=Loonie