

## Evotional

**Sermon title: "Our vision."**

**Bible passages: Matthew 13:44-46.**

**Speaker: Neil Durling.**

**Date: 4.1.15.**

### **Message:**

#### **Our vision:**

A vision is an ungraspable aim. Ours is about seeking the Kingdom of God: *"Living like Jesus and sharing him with others as we seek first the kingdom of God."*

And let's clarify what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God/heaven. Tom Wright in *Jesus and the victory of God* says:

"The most important thing to recognise about the first-century Jewish use of kingdom-language is that it was bound up with the hopes and expectations of Israel. 'Kingdom of god' was not a vague phrase, or a cipher with a general religious aura. It had nothing much, at least in the first instance, to do with what happened to human beings after they died. The reverent periphrasis [roundabout way of speaking] 'kingdom of heaven', so long misunderstood by some Christians to mean 'a place, namely heaven, where saved souls go to live after death', meant nothing of the sort in Jesus' world: it was simply a Jewish way of talking about Israel's god becoming king. And, when this god became king, the whole world, the world of space and time, would at last be put to rights."

With this in mind several things pop out of these two parables that are relevant to us:

**1: Both people are seeking:** One of them (the one in the field) doesn't know it until he finds the treasure. Jesus reminds us that we come to him and embrace his kingdom in all sorts of ways. I believe everyone is searching for meaning in life. A retired CEO said that we all have five balls that we juggle: Family, health, spirituality, leisure and work. Four are made of glass and will break if dropped. The other is made of rubber and bounces. The rubber one? Work. And yet we put most of our effort into work. Should we seek the meaning of life in work?

**2: Both gifts are hidden in the world:** If we could shrink the world's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following (according to *Phillip M Harter of Stanford University, School of Medicine*):

- 57 Asians/21 Europeans/14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north & south/8 Africans.
- 52 female/48 male.
- 70 would be non-white/30 would be white.
- 70 not Christian/30 Christian.
- 89 heterosexual/11 homosexual
- 6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth all from USA.
- 80 in substandard housing/70 unable to read/50 suffer from malnutrition.
- 1 near death/1 near birth.
- 1 would have a college education.
- 1 would own a computer.

The Kingdom of God is hidden in the field or market stall. It is a mystery, just as us being hidden with Christ is a mystery (Col. 3:3-4).

The implication is clear... If we want to experience the kingdom we have to buy the field (the world). Robert Farrar Capon writes:

- "The man who discovered the treasure did not simply buy the cubic yard or so of nice clean dirt in which he cleverly buried it. He bought the whole property: sinkholes, dungheaps, poison ivy, and sticker bushes, plus all the rats, mice, flies, and beetles that came with it."

Russell Rook says:

- "The actual limits of the kingdom in this world, suggests St. Augustine, are known only to God himself. The church is, of course, one of the key instruments used by God in his kingdom, but it is not the only one. Therefore, the kingdom must be present both inside and outside of the church's borders, and must be able both to encourage and disturb the church. Above all else, we must remember that the kingdom is everywhere that God is. And since God is omnipresent, so too is the kingdom."
- "As the man finds the treasure in the field, we will find the treasure in the world, for that is what the field represents. This interpretation stands as a rebuke to those of us who go searching every Sunday for a kingdom removed from the world. The parable of the treasure is a big, red stop sign to people like me who get it into their unenlightened heads that the kingdom is only to be found in the lyrics of hymns and songs, the texts of sermons, the flowery prose of prayers, and the Sabbath retreat from worldly people and earthly reality."

**3: Both gifts are of immense value:** They bought the field and the pearl! The Church needs to show the one pearl of great price to people, there's no need for a hard sell.

**4: Both gifts cost everything:** Henri Nouwen wrote:

- "Indeed, how divided my heart has been and still is! I want to love God, but also to make a career. I want to be a good Christian, but also to have my success as a teacher, preacher, or speaker. I want to be a saint, but also enjoy the sensations of the sinner. I want to be close to Christ but also popular and liked by many people. No wonder that living becomes a tiring enterprise. The characteristic of a saint is, to borrow Kierkegaard's words, 'To will one thing.' Well, I will more than one

thing, am double-hearted, double-minded, and have very divided loyalty... You cannot follow him just a little bit. Everything or nothing.”

The word “sold” in Greek means “selling into slavery”. This is an all or nothing transaction. Furthermore, Jesus said that to enter the kingdom we must become like children. This doesn’t mean we’re all cute and cuddly and can dribble down our jumpers. In Jesus’ day children had no rights. We are being challenged to give up our rights, follow the King and become a part of his kingdom movement.

**5: Both gifts bring great joy:** Put bluntly, both customers were satisfied. In Philippians 3:7-11 Paul says that everything is as rubbish when compared to Jesus. C.S. Lewis put it well when he wrote: “Joy is the serious business of heaven.”

**In 2015 I want to be a part of a church with Jesus at the centre. A church that seeks the kingdom of God in the world, knowing it is of immense value and costs everything but brings deep joy.**

**Questions:**

1. Please discuss each of the five points made in this evotional.
2. Does anything else grab you?

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, Thank you for welcoming me into your kingdom movement. Amen.