

What The Kingdom Of Heaven Is Like

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you can turn back to the portion of scripture we read in the Gospel of Matthew and chapter 13 and again we're going to consider the parables of the hidden treasure and the parable of the power of great value. Now from the Old Testament until the New Testament they claim that there's a period of 400 years or so and it seems during that time that God was silent other than a few folk who faithfully worshiped the Lord and we see them the likes of Joseph and Mary were worshipers of God in the true sense that we understand worship.

There was Elizabeth and Sakharayas who Sakharayas worked in the temple at the time and there was the two folk that were always found in the temple, Simeon and a lady called Anna.

So obviously there was a remnant of people who worshiped the Lord during that period but whenever there's a time of you could say a time of slack in regards to God's spirit working among the people you find that other things come in into the worship of God's what was known as Israel being God's nation or God himself called Israel at one point. He said out of Egypt I bring out my son. So during that period and leading up to the time of Jesus there were four kind of main parties that were about at that time there were Pharisees now the Pharisees were known as the fundamental religious people who added to God's law another 613 laws over and above what the Bible had said. There were the Sadducees they were the liberal kind of religious people where anything really went in regards to them and they were quite pally with the Romans they wanted to collaborate with the Romans so that they could have an easy life. There was folk known as the Essins and they were they were more like a monastic kind of people who locked away themselves from the rest of the world and some of them living in caves and there was another lot called the zealots and what is interesting we've been going through in Glasgow looking at the disciples and actually Jesus himself chose a cellar called Simon. They were more like the nationalists they were the ones who fought and wanted the Romans out and you can understand possibly the motive that Simon the cellar had in the first place to go and follow Jesus because they thought that Jesus was going to be a nerfly king and that he was going to get the Romans out so who better for the zealots to follow but someone like Jesus Christ but obviously in his following with Jesus he came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and he became one of the apostles so you can imagine this was the turmoil of the Middle East at that time but it seemed for

God to be the perfect time to send the Lord Jesus Christ into the world and when Christ comes things begin to happen it always does. When God decides to move among the people there's nothing that is going to stop him. We were aware of that here in Carlyway with obviously the revival that was here leading up to the Second World War when many people were brought to faith there was folk coming to faith when we were here with yourselves and it was amazing to see God at work among the folk and God in the middle of all of that. God is in control of all things now in a busy time or in a quiet time it is always God's time. Nothing changes that's no different and if it's God that's going to save people he's going to do it his way and only in his way because if it's not going to happen well that's God's providence and the reason for it we don't understand but what God is doing day on day in day out is laying out his plan for the whole of history because God is the

God of history. Now can you imagine when Jesus turned up he turned up in a period where religion was rife apart from a few remnant people worthy people like we spoke of and the ones that God used in many ways like Mary and Joseph, Satharatus and Elizabeth and folk like that.

[4 : 49] So coming into that context you would have thought man this must be one of the worst times to come with the gospel of Jesus Christ. You could have picked a worse time because the Romans ruled with an iron rod although they spoke about the Pax Romana which was Roman peace but the only way they came to that was simply because they led and ruled with an iron rod and you had to do what they said and if you didn't there would be trouble.

Jesus comes into that context but the other situation was this was the religious problem. It is those with all these add on laws that they added on to what God had given them in the Bible. Little things that they had to do. There were Sabbath day laws which were absolutely ridiculous for people to do and no one could do them. Absolutely no. Apart from Pharisees themselves they saw that they could live up to this standard and that is why they were so unapproachable. You couldn't approach them in any way because they seemed to be on another level to what the ordinary people were like. So into that context the gospel of Jesus Christ come. Jesus comes into our world and we here see here one Matthew who was a tax collector and he is writing about the gospel coming into the context that happened and that was taking place at the time of Jesus coming which was God's perfect timing for the gospel to come into our world. Matthew was a Jew himself. He predominantly obviously he's writing this paper thinking in his own mind I am writing to my fellow Jews. I have to be careful in what I say and how I write. So when he speaks about the kingdom of heaven look we see later on who was a Gentile speaks of it as the kingdom of God. But Matthew was a Jew and Jewish people would not take the name of God. They wouldn't write the name.

They wouldn't say it on their lips. So he calls it the kingdom of heaven but it means exactly the same as the kingdom of God. So what is Jesus doing here? Well as we see in our scriptures that Jesus chose 12 people to be his apostles and these apostles are going to have to take his good news into the world to the ends of the earth. The gospel is to be taken. Now if you're going to do that they are apprenticeship they're doing serving their time with Jesus. They are apprentices of Jesus. They were students of Jesus and Jesus has to there's so much stuff in their mind that needs to be cleared out all the nonsense of all the political and the religious groups. This is how we were brought up. This is having to come out of their minds and their hearts and what Christ has to do is to instill in them what the kingdom of heaven is like and that is what these parables are like and in them Jesus explains what it is like. So what Jesus is doing in a series of parables he's describing the different aspects of the kingdom which is so different to the kingdom of the world. Our way of thinking is not the way that Jesus thought or the way Jesus does things. So he's explaining to them what is to be like in the kingdom, what the kingdom is to be like and the kingdom specific nature because one day there's only going to be the kingdom of God because the kingdom of this world is going to come to an end. So it was absolutely important two things to know God personally know God and get to know what this kingdom that they were to go out with to tell other people this is what God's kingdom is like. So we are teaching you what Christ's kingdom is like so that you know what is like when you put your faith in Christ you are a member you become a citizen of that kingdom.

So because they were the ones were taking this message to the ends of the earth they needed to know what the kingdom of heaven was like. Now I want you to note if you turn in your Bibles to the beginning of chapter 13 and you see there the parable of the sower.

Now I know that you're all familiar with this there were four types of soil in this parable there was the hard soil there was the shallow soil there was the soil that had thorns and thistles and there was the good soil. Now you think about this soil and you think about the amount of times that you heard the gospel of Jesus Christ that is the farmer sowing the seed and every single time in your history in your personal history God is sowing the seed. Now you personally are the sample of soil and for how many years you've heard the gospel falling on you you're either hard soil which it doesn't penetrate and the birds of the air come and pick at it and take it away. The shallow soil is yeah you follow for a wee while you're so excited flowers glow up and the plant seems to be thriving but the next thing it just withers away because there's no root in your life. And then there was the thistles that is focus started following but then the cares of this world come and start choking them and before you know it they've forgotten all the spiritual things and the seed that was there from Christ. And notice it is only in the good soil that the seed will grow and have root and grow and become plentiful where the birds of the air will come and lay their nests in there. Now I want you to think of this we've got four parts three of them are useless there's only one soil that is good. So does that suggest that three quarters of us are not going to get the message and only a quarter of us is going to get it? How sad is that tonight if we're part of the many that we are of the three quarters and don't get it hard soil it just bounces off the shallow soil lasts for a while did we not understand that or see that in our own history and what about the cares of the world there was a man with Paul that Paul loved dearly a man called Demas and he was part of Paul's team but then later on as he's writing to Timothy he mentioned

[12 : 03] Demas and he said Demas has deserted us and he's gone back he's gone back to Thessalonica he simply had gone back to the world. Now the point is this and we were looking at this here last week and it's quite a thought really because what we spoke about last week we were looking at Judas Iscariot as being one of the disciples of Jesus and Jesus said that this would happen Jesus said that this would happen now this is a sobering thought we hated when it happened but Jesus said that it would happen if it didn't happen then Jesus would have been wrong and when we see it happening we can say that this was true of what Christ said in scripture so if you see someone falling away sadly and it breaks our hearts and we see that there's three types of soil and not taking the gospel at all apart from the good soil it is so sad but Jesus said it and Jesus said that this would happen if we see it in our day we can say well Jesus told us that this would be happening in our world but the thing is this he has given us the gospel and every time it's preached you're hoping that the seed is going to fall on good ground at no matter how old we are or how young we are that the seed is going to take root in a person's life look at what happened to Matthew the tax collector when Jesus basically said to him as he was passing along just a rogue of a man to be honest and the Jewish people hated him because of what he was doing Jesus said to him Matthew follow me he left absolutely everything and he went and followed him so in that thought in our minds let us look at the parable first of all of the hidden treasure that we read in our passage and see what this would have meant first of all to the hearers to the ones that he said this to and as those who read Matthew for the first time and also what it means to us today notice verse 44 in chapter chapter 13 the kingdom of heaven is like treasuring treasure hidden in a field now what does this mean what we have is a man obviously he was renting a field he goes out his daily business obviously plowing or something it seems to suggest that he's plowing whatever he's doing is what he did every day in his life this does not suggest that he went out looking for the treasure no while he was going about his business he came and he stumbled on the treasure and notice in verse 44 we're told he found it which the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered it up he buried it again because he knew it was worth a lot so he goes with great joy as the verse tells us and he goes and buys the field so that the treasure might be his now in the context what does this mean in the days of Jesus they had no banks no or for a for ordinary people there were no banks so what people did was they buried their valuables this was a practice in their history because in the Old Testament there was so many raiding a nations coming in the Syrians were always raiding the Philistines

and all these nations round about would be coming in doing raids in Israel and going back out and what they took was the spoils of war anything they could find of value they took with them so what the people did was they buried their riches in Jesus day the Romans had occupied the land just like the Germans in World War two remember when they used to go about it we see it on our television screens of things documentaries and things like that they used to look at art and in museums and things and they would go and say we'll take that we'll take this that'll be ours and all of this will be ours taking anything that was of value so what people did in Jesus day was to bury anything that was of value now when this man what this man did when he found the treasure he hid it and he bought the field so the treasure could be his now this might not sit well with us in the 21st century because obviously it's a different time we might say this is not this is not ethical what this guy did he simply robbed the owner of the land surely if this man found treasure in the field he should have gone to the owner and say listen mate

I found this in your field obviously this is yours and I'll have to give it to you but Jesus is saying this in a context where there was a Jewish rabbinic law which stated if a man finds scattered fruit or money it belongs to the finder if a man finds scattered fruit or money it belongs to the finder so when the Jews heard this parable they would have been okay about it this is okay this person found treasure and of course he can go and buy the field and it is lawful for what he's going to do so the treasure obviously didn't belong to the owner because if the owner is going to sell the field and he had treasure in it he would have gone and got the treasure before selling the field so obviously he didn't know about the treasure being there and thirdly if the man himself had been dishonest well what's the point of buying the field just take the treasure with you and don't mention it that you found this in someone else's field anyway that's not the point of the parable but just in case we get stuck in our politically correct age it's best to understand the context but getting back to the main purpose of the parable this man found this treasure by accident you could say and it was so valuable to him that he sold absolutely everything he had so that he could get it and that is the point of the parable he was willing to give everything a way so as to get the treasure willing to give everything up so as to get the treasure now there's a slight difference in the second parable in that here we see the merchant is actively looking for a prized pearl look at verse 45 46 again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it he went looking for it but his reaction at finding a special pearl was exactly the same reaction that the guy who stumbled on the treasure in the first parable it was all a prized find for both of them now pearls were of great value in Jesus day and this man was a merchant that's what he did I come from a family of merchants as you know and when merchants what do they do what do they do here in our county's force they would go to stormway and go to the wholesalers and I had to do that taking my uncle over the van and get the stuff of the wholesalers and what the merchant did was that when he got back home he up with a price by a hundred percent and then sold it to the poor staples and when I used to go to the shop and say to him I'm not paying that because I know exactly what you paid for it and he used to say to me take it or leave it because he could name his price this was a merchant who went out looking for prize things but this pearl was something that he wanted for himself he was deal diligently searching for it all his life it was a special pearl their pearls in those days were the equivalent of diamonds in our own they were only found in the Red Sea this is what historians tell us Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and what they did was they had to dive for them obviously but in those days there weren't any diving gears so what they did was they wrapped a

rope around a boulder and had a bit of rope that would take them to the bottom of whatever the oysters were through that over the side and the other thing was tied to their ankle and that was to keep them on the bottom until they found the oysters where they needed a good breath to do that and then they would open the rope and go back up if they found their price so no wonder they were really expensive again in the Jewish Talmud that is a commentary on Jewish history customs and culture there it speaks that pearls are beyond price pearls are beyond price so when Christ speaks about when Jesus speaks about the man in search of a fine pearl he's speaking about pearl that is beyond price so let's bring the two these things together and see what Jesus is pointing to us see what Jesus is teaching us apostles here this is what the kingdom of heaven is like what is the kingdom of heaven like the two basic things in regards to the kingdom of heaven we know is the king of the kingdom is Jesus Christ our lord what's the next thing it is his salvation he came to seek and to save the lost it is lost it's going to be it's going to be populated with lost people who were found by Jesus that's quite something it is only the lost he saved so we don't see ourselves lost tonight without Christ will ever be saved but he came to seek and to save the lost and in this kingdom we have the gospel which is good news the first man stumbles on the treasure and the second man finds it after seeking for it diligently for a while and isn't that how we come to Christ some people stumble on the gospel but there's others who find it after looking for it for a long time some stumble on the treasure and some find it after seeking for it so let's look at the man who found and stumbled on the treasure Jesus is telling this because he's teaching the disciples the apostles because they're having to go out with this great message the gospel they need to understand what this is about so you think about the 12 apostles well obviously 11 but we didn't know anything about Judas at this point he was counted as one of the 12 and the gospel was so precious to them they thought because it was so precious to them that others would be influenced in the same way that it would be precious to others as well so they thought that because they found the treasure that other people would be looking for it in the same way in the kingdom because it was so valuable but the first point in regards the first parable is this the treasure is hidden it is not openly displayed for all how is that well not all see the value of the treasure one man's treasure is another man's poison says the proverb we are told in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 4 and this is solemn the God of this world

has blinded the eyes of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God so if you don't see it tonight you are blinded by the God of this world that's the reason but it still isn't an excuse for us because really our salvation depends on us we can't say well Lord the devil blinded my eyes and I couldn't see it but that is what he's doing and notice secondly the treasure is found unexpectedly this man was just outplow and he just came across the treasure all of a sudden think of Saul of Tashas he's on his way to Damascus to take more people back because he was so annoyed with the people which belonged to the way as he called them and they were just disturbing the whole far asacal religious thing that it became to a point of annoyance to him but what happened on the road to Damascus he met the king of the kingdom of heaven and you know the sad thing is this he thought he was already in the kingdom as a Pharisee he thought he was already in and on his way to put prisoners in prison Jesus stopped him in his tracks and what does he say the one who thought was in the kingdom he says to the king of the kingdom who are you Lord he didn't know Jesus he didn't know him and a lot of religious people are like that you know they think if I become in our context I think there was this air of and I'm thinking of my own life there was a kind of air of holiness about us in the communion week because you knew there was going to be visitors that you knew there was going to be loads of sermons there were lots of things you put on the suit and everything and you just went to church it was a thing to do so there's an air of air of far asacal really that is what it was like that is what

[27 : 42] I was like in that sense that is what Paul was like but if Jesus had met me on the track then I would have said like Paul who are you Lord because I did not know him at that point and you know what is interesting in regards to that moment he fell off his horse he never stopped asking the question who are you Lord because he couldn't get enough of Jesus because this treasure came so special to him that he wanted to get to know more and more and more about it he even said in Philippians 3 10 11 oh that I may know him this is why he is in prison in Rome that I may know him on the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from a dead by any means possible I'm going to give everything away so that

I can get this treasure to be mine all mine we go Christopher's we go and she's coming like any toy they're always hurt who says this is mine the share we're no rat knows mine it's mine and you know in a sense in a sense that's what we're like with Jesus of course you want to share it with others but what you have for yourself is your treasure and it's so special that it's yours my Lord and my savior maybe you stumbled into church tonight I don't know why you're here I'm glad you are because it's lovely to see you and you know maybe tonight you've stumbled onto the treasure of the gospel for the very first time we could have been under it for years and years and years and didn't get it but tonight it just clicked like that and you've been drawn to this treasure Jesus Christ and you he is presented to you in a way that only Christ can do to show her suspect his surpassing worth of knowing Jesus which up till now was hidden how many of us have walked away from a sermon and said I never understood any of that but yet just like a light switch going on we seem to understand the gospel for the very first time do you see the values of Christ tonight do you see the value of his salvation or are the things of this world more valuable to us well if they are we are being blinded by the God of this world I couldn't give my life up there's so much fun there's so much joy I couldn't give that up compared to dress it to treasure we'll see in a minute what Paul thought of it has come to the second parable the merchant the merchant was a seeker you get people coming to church who are seekers they are looking for Jesus Christ he diligently looked for the prized pearl and their seekers here tonight I believe and you see the value of Christ more than your life we're all getting on a bit really just a few younger folk but we're getting on and you're really thinking is this what life is all about is this it surely there's got to be something and you know what places that thought in your heart is this is the God shaped void that remains empty until God fills it himself with himself his prized pearl in your life the Bible says in Romans 10 17 faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ always attend the means of grace remember Charles Spurgeon that we know so so well of on a snowy morning couldn't get to his own church went to a church and the preacher didn't have any hardly anything but he repeated a verse can't remember which one is repent and be saved something like that and he went on and on saying that because he didn't know much else but what he had was God's word and it went into the very heart of Charles Spurgeon who became a huge preacher for Jesus Christ so we should attend because there'll be no blessing if we stay away the blessing is here or next door where God's people meet to worship God

promises to be there in their midst and the Jews own words pearls were beyond price well let me tell you that the salvation of Jesus is beyond price the good news for us today is that this is freely offered to us in the gospel what is free so what did Jesus mean then and this parable when the first man had to sell everything to buy the field to get a treasure and the second man had to give up everything so as to buy the pair in both cases the word buying or bought is involved what does that mean I could buy my own salvation is that what the Bible is saying here well the Bible never contradicts itself as it says elsewhere that we cannot save ourselves we cannot buy our salvation we cannot work our way up to God Romans 3 especially tells us salvation is of God himself it is God's gift to us it is not of works we are told in Ephesians 2:8 lest we boast it is all of grace if you want to turn to Isaiah chapter 55 I say a 55 and verse 1 that there speaks of God's salvation and he says come everyone who thirsts come to the waters and he who has no money come buy and eat come buy wine and milk without money and without price it says come buy there's a transaction purchase transaction going on here in salvation what is that transaction that takes place it's not money or our works but there has to be an exchange and what God wants is all of you all of you and he will give all of him in return he wants all of you is that too much to ask tonight I want you I've come tonight looking for you is that too much for us to give the apostle Paul again said in Philippians 3 when he spoke previously he was a Pharisee we read in Philippians chapter 3 if you can turn if you have your Bibles probably you have these usually up on your screen we usually do that for Philippians 3 verses 7 to 9 he was thinking of you speaking about his life as a Pharisee but this is what he said but whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ everything that

I have in life it was absolute loss indeed I count everything as loss because of the worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish count them as down manure in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from a law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteous from God that depends on faith faith in Jesus Christ my Lord Jesus himself speaks of this transaction in Matthew chapter 16:24 where he said if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily that means picking up his cross what is across signify is signifies dying to self and picking up the cross daily and you know I was thinking about this this afternoon what would it be like for someone like Saul of Tarsus who was a proud Pharisee who thought because of his own good deeds was going to get him into the kingdom of heaven yet he questions Jesus who are you Lord you know from that moment what happens to the proud person is this because of grace you become humble you become humble because you know that you're a wretch and you cannot be anything other than a wretch before the Lord you see religion will not cut it with God let us deny ourselves and in the exchange described we are told in the first parable notices we come back to Matthew chapter 13 and verse 44 the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up then in his joy he goes and sells everything then in his joy this is joy that is unspeakable and full of glory you speak to those who put their faith in Christ and quite often you find that they're the ones who are having a tough time in life they'll speak of these tough times they'll speak of sad times they'll speak of trying times they may be privately asked the Lord

Lord where are you in my situation where you find the heavens as brass and you feel that God's not listening to you but you ask them okay then give your Jesus up are no way will I give Jesus up because he's my only hope in life once you've tasted and seen that the Lord is good all other taste is bitter in your mouth there is nothing as sweet as Christ himself what is reassuring to the Christian is this that I will never let you go now that your family again I will always look out for you you are my son my daughter you are mine and you are pressured you are precious you are my treasure in reverse to what Christ is to us you become his treasure or I would never give you up he sees you as his prized possession in fact for you to be in his kingdom it cost him dearly it cost him the life of his own son no wonder he calls you the apple of his eye no wonder he's engraved you on his hand you know tattoos can be dangerous especially for young courting couples because one minute it could be merry or whatever and the next thing the romance might break up someone else's name would be scratched off and someone else put on God has engraved your name on his hand that is there for all eternity can you imagine when we go home and his hands are open to welcome you you see your very name tattooed on his hands as he wraps his arms around you in his joy this man sold everything so that he could buy the field what he had in his heart was the joy of the Lord which is the gladness of our hearts that comes from knowing God and being in Christ and with Christ remember when Jesus was born what the angels announced they announced good tidings of great joy had come into the world and for those who find him I can guarantee you that it is an unspeakable joy and full of glory and this is only the beginning for our loved ones who have passed really it's the end of a chapter but it's not the end of the book it's really the prologue because when you think of time it's so short compared to eternity so it can only be our lives the first chapter but in that first chapter there's the good news of the gospel oh it is there at the very beginning since Christ came our only hope of glory Christ in us so surely tonight surely tonight we will make sure that we will all one day be with the ones who have gone already home that we as a crowd oh there's that car away lot they're always together always together

[42 : 55] why because of Christ and because you put your faith in him even when you thought there were times were difficult even when you felt there wasn't much happening odd isn't those days like in the days where Christ came which was perfect it is perfect for you to put your trust in Jesus will you do it tonight if you haven't done it yet may God bless his word eternal father how we delight in the gospel message and how we love it and how we love you thank you Jesus our closing Psalm is Psalm 68 and this is in the Scottish altar now this is a Psalm that speaks of a victorious king and as he comes home he things takes with him at the spoils of war but what he does is that he shares these spoils with everyone at home and that is what it's going to be like for us when we go home because in Romans 8 it tells us that we are heirs of God and joint years with Christ I want to share with you my glory so that it is yours as well verse 18 thou hast to Lord most glorious ascended up on high and in triumph victorious led captive captivity thou hast received gifts for men women boys and girls for such as did rebel yet aimed for them that God the Lord admins tough them might 12 verses 18 to 20 the gospel so I'm starting to see a real man

May my dwell bless thee, the Lord, who wishes to us all our salvation go.

Who did he win this benefit us plensiously have, Lord?

Thee, all salvation is a God, who is our God most strong, and now to God the Lord from net the issues to be long.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forevermore. Amen.