

Matthew 13:44-52  
Treasure in a Field  
Proper 12  
July 25, 26, 2020  
Prince of Peace  
Topeka

Tell me what you think about this business deal. A farmer discovers an old geological survey while doing some research on his farm. This old survey indicated a strong likelihood that there is natural gas on his neighbor's land. This information had been long forgotten. So this farmer sells his farm and buys the land of his neighbor – without revealing the reason for this odd land transfer. Upon receiving the new farm he obtains a gas lease and ends up being very rich “gas and oil well” farmer.

I wonder how people in Kansas would react to such a business deal. I wonder how the neighbor who sold the land would feel about being suckered out of his land. My hunch is that it wouldn't go over very well.

And yet, isn't this exactly what our Gospel lesson described as the “kingdom of heaven?” “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 all that he has and buys that field.” Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven is like a man discovering rich minerals on someone's land – and once he had covered up that fact, he goes out and buys it.

This doesn't sound right does it? It doesn't seem right that a man would "cover up" the treasure – and then go buy it from someone who obviously doesn't know of its existence. This wouldn't play well in Topeka – would it? The kingdom of heaven sounds rather foreign to our way of thinking in the kingdom of Kansas.

And so it is. The way of thinking in the kingdom of heaven is a long way from the way of thinking in kingdom of Kansas.

In the kingdom of Kansas – there is a sense of right and wrong. We know what is right and what is wrong. We know how to handle dishonest people. There is still kind of a "take 'em out and hang 'em" mentality here. I can still remember playing under the Hangman's tree in Medicine Lodge, Kansas.

We pass group judgment on wrong doers all the time here in the kingdom of Kansas. You hear it while your getting your hair done, in the isles of grocery stores, on the golf course, at the post office, at the gym or while you are out to eat. My hunch is that there is even some gossip shared and jugements past right out in church parking lot. We like to know the dirt on others. I think it a form of comparative righteousness. If we can make others look really bad --- then maybe we ain't so bad ourselves.

To make matters worse we make these same kinds of judgments about ourselves. We know what is right and what is wrong – and even if we would never admit it to anyone else – we know we have done wrong. And very often we judge ourselves even more harshly than we judge others. We are quick to hang our selves on the hangman's tree. We know what we deserve. And what we deserve was described in our Gospel lesson for today as a "place (where) there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

That is how we judge things in the Kingdom of Kansas. That is how we judge one another in the Kingdom of Kansas. That is how we judge ourselves.

How different is the way of thinking in the Kingdom of Heaven. “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 all that he has and buys that field.” We would consider this dishonest in the Kingdom of Kansas. And we would consider it dishonest to “cover up” one’s sins. Yet that is exactly what God has done. God has “covered up” our sins so that we could experience the joy found only in the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the Kingdom of Kansas sins are uncovered by gossip and self-condemnation. In the Kingdom of Kansas sins are paid for on the hangman’s tree of public ridicule, and guilt and shame.

How unlike the Kingdom of Kansas is the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Kingdom of Heaven sins are covered and paid for on the tree of the cross. Jesus gave up his life on a tree so that all of our sins could be forgiven; so that they could be buried in the eternal waters of our baptisms; so that we could get what we don’t deserve – the Kingdom of Heaven.

Our Gospel lesson doesn’t make sense to us because we cling to our Kingdom here in Kansas. We like our sense of right and wrong. We like the power it gives us to condemn others and even when it means we condemn ourselves. This is a power we think is like God’s power and so we crave it for ourselves.

But our God has used his power in a very different way. The ways of the Kingdom of Heaven are very different than the ways of the Kingdom of Kansas. “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.”

The good news for you and me is that this treasure is not hidden for us. God doesn't keep this as his little secret. We know about the treasure hidden in the field. We know about the kingdom of heaven. We don't have to wait for it to be revealed. We don't have to wait for the treasure to be dug up. We don't have to wait at all for the kingdom of heaven – God has given it to us already today.

The joy experienced by the man in our Gospel lesson is ours. We don't have to wait till we die or till Judgment Day. The treasure isn't hidden any longer. Jesus didn't stay hidden in the grave. He rose from the grave to give us the joy of heaven now.

We have good news and we have good news to tell. There is no time to cast judgments on others. For those of us who own the field where the treasure had been buried – we have good news to tell. Gossip and rumors can not spread this joy. Self judgment and condemnation have no place for those of us who live each day in the kingdom of heaven.

In our Gospel lesson for this morning Jesus revealed to us just how different the kingdom of heaven is from the kingdom of this world. Our human stubbornness lures us into thinking that the ways of this world are better – but let me tell you friends – the ways of this world bring no joy!

Joy is ours who own the kingdom of heaven. We have had a treasure revealed to us that was once hidden in a field. Jesus came into our world and gave up all he owned – even his own life – to buy this field for you and for me. The joy of this once hidden treasure is ours to enjoy and to share. For Jesus sake!

Amen.