

The odds were pretty long. Each time he dug into the ground after a beep he hoped it would be treasure of some sort. He wasn't prepared for what he saw. Gator211, the username of an individual on the Oklahoma Metal Detecting and Treasure hunting club website, posted a picture of his find from August 8<sup>th</sup>. There was the 1956 dime and the 1930s Wheat Penny. Both had some value. But it was nothing compared to the diamond ring.

Gator211 must have known this was a valuable find. He probably started calculating how much he could get for the diamond and the gold. Then he looked closer. It wasn't the valuable piece of treasure he was looking for. It wasn't a diamond or gold. Just a real good looking fake. That's the life of a treasure hunter with a metal detector. Sometimes you strike it big and sometimes you get faked out.

Treasure hunters see potential in the same places you and I see parks or historical sites to visit. They want to know what's hidden. All around us God is at work. He's hidden so people don't always think he's working. Others come across something that is most certainly God's working and they deny it was anything at all. These are people looking for wealth, maybe even spiritual wealth, but they refuse to find it in God. We are all looking for spiritual wealth and Jesus' parables in the gospel are treasure that doesn't even require a metal detector...

**Jesus shows how to find spiritual wealth  
Found unexpectedly  
Worth more than anything**

Finding treasure in fields today isn't so common. We have banks to keep our money safe. Kings and other important rich people didn't use banks many years ago. They kept one third of their money buried safe someplace. They might choose an ordinary field because no one would look there. Of course if the person died without telling anyone the treasure would be lost until someone unexpectedly found it.

The field isn't so important for the story. The treasure is. The field is there with the treasure in it, but it went unnoticed. That was until some unsuspecting person dug up the treasure which was there the whole time. That person found it unexpectedly. Jesus uses the treasure in the parable to mean the kingdom of heaven. That's a technical term meaning God's saving activity among sinful human beings by which he calls them to faith. It's the work that God does to save people from their sins. Its activity God is doing all the time. Yet for many it goes by unnoticed. God's saving activity is only found unexpectedly.

There are people right now experiencing a crisis. Their life is going down a road that they wish it wasn't. Everything was going fine. They were perfectly content where they were in life. But now things are all messed up. Now they have no idea what or who will help. It's possible the person experiencing a crisis will be you one day. How would you cope with death if there wasn't anything beyond this life to look forward to? How could you press on through life after losing a friend? What possibly could you offer a family member struggling with addiction? The feeling of helplessness is only cured by convincing yourself everything is under control. Psychology can explain the reasons you feel the way you do. The courts might decide in certain cases what's fair for two parties in disagreement. Perhaps you look for the right book to help. It's during the crisis that we want to find stability and we'll look anywhere we can to find it.

Some things are better found by accident. That's what it feels like with God. **"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."** Like a man finding buried treasure it seems we discovered God's work by accident. In some ways we did. God's grace was hidden to us. We brought nothing that changed him. We didn't know we needed peace with God until almost by accident we discovered we had them. That's not entirely the story. Forgiveness from God, a peaceful relationship with him, these are no accidents. Only by God's grace through Christ did they happen. Answering the question 'why me' isn't important just like it wouldn't matter what field you found treasure in. What's important is that it becomes yours. What matters is owning it. What matters is that God's saving activity allowed you to find Christ.

Christ is no longer hidden. He's clearly presented in the Bible. That's where we need to be to constantly find him day after day. We do it in worship, devotions emailed right to our phone, Bible passage of the day sent via Facebook or Twitter. These help us to find Christ each day. And we can help others find him too. We have this unexpected treasure we get to share. The more we share the more of Christ God's grace shares with us.

I was sitting at my parents' kitchen table a couple of weeks back. My father brought out a cigar box from my grandmother. Now I'm no coin collector, but inside was a bunch of old looking coins that I'm thinking my dad hopes are worth something more than their face value. Wheat pennies, Kennedy silver dollars, and all sorts of other stuff I don't even remember. I can only guess they're worth something because they're old. But I'm not trained to recognize valuable coins. Those that find Christ Jesus have found something much more valuable. But are they trained to recognize it? Can they recognize in Jesus that pearl worth more than anything?

Merchants who buy and sell in pearls look at many during the course of a lifetime. They're always collecting, never having enough good ones to stop searching. Then one day things change. **"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."** This one pearl was worth more than all the other pearls he had combined. Jesus relates that to the kingdom of heaven. God's saving activity is just so valuable. It's more valuable than anything you have or anything you could possibly want. No need to search more once you've found something so valuable. Nothing else can compare to the saving activity of God. It makes us spiritually wealthy.

Like the merchant we may be spending our lives looking for something that has great value. We might think we've found it in an expensive education. We can add up the money we spent, the hours put in, and the effort exerted and it seems like we've got something valuable. It certainly helps when it comes to job hunting. Others put value in it and tell us what we can earn because of it. That's how we go about building earthly wealth. We hang up the college degree on the wall and take pride in our accomplishment. If building earthly wealth is all there is a college degree, or a good job, or a great retirement plan might be the most valuable. But what about building spiritual wealth? Can any of that be worth anything?

God has opened your eyes to his saving activity. You've come to hear the message about Christ found in God's Word. This is how the saving activity of God is done in the world. The gospel good news that shares with people how the Savior lived and died for them is compared to that pearl of great price. Christ's death on the cross is recognized immediately as having value. Seeing this Savior at work in our lives makes us aware that nothing is more valuable. If people see in us that the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, his Word, and his sacraments are the most important it will be easier to share with them that message. We will be showing how valuable Christ is to us. We don't have to sell everything we have, but we should treat it as though we would be willing to. We must be prepared to lose everything so that we might never lose what our Savior has done.

Finding treasure with a metal detector probably won't make you wealthy. People look a long time without ever finding anything other than some pins, shell casings, and metal cans. Every once and a while unexpectedly they find something worth a little something. With Jesus we've already found something that's valuable. Jesus is showing us how to have real spiritual wealth. You only find it unexpectedly in God's grace. And you can be sure that when you have the kingdom of heaven, God's saving activity among sinners and the way he brings people to faith, you have something that's worth more than anything else you could ever find.