

Sea Glass: Fun in the Sun

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Message for North East United Methodist Church

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“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. 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. Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied. He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

-Matthew 13:44-52

Reading the Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price, I am reminded of walking along the beach, looking for Sea Glass.

I was introduced to Sea Glass by good friends of our who live in Bethany. On the table in their living room is a bowl filled with pieces of glass of every color. Many times one side is frost covered and the other shiny, the effect of sand and waves.



As I researched Sea Glass, I found out that purple, gray, pink (*often from Great Depression era plates*), teal, yellow, and especially, red and orange are the rarest colors to find as you walk along the beach. Orange Sea Glass it is estimated is found only once in every 10,000 pieces found.



People have begun to collect Sea Glass and it is used in jewelry and artwork. The North America Sea Glass Association has an Annual Conference and newsletter for collectors.

I enjoy walking the beach treasure hunting, looking for pieces of Sea Glass, of various colors, searching for that rare piece, perhaps from the Great Depression era or an old cobalt blue bottle top from a Milk of Magnesia bottle...



...or perhaps a piece of black glass that can be traced back to an old eighteenth-century wine bottle. It is always exciting to find a piece, imagining that it was dropped from a pirate ship traversing the shores of Delaware or perhaps finding a pink shard from an 1845 Baltimore Torpedo Soda bottle, washed up upon the shores over 150 years later.



But as exciting as it might be to find Sea Glass on an outing to the beach, it doesn't compare to the treasure Jesus speaks of, as He stands in a boat, pushed off a few yards from shore, along the Sea of Galilee. Can you imagine the man Jesus describes? First century Hebrew, staff in hand, with pressing business in the city he decides to take a shortcut through a field. This was a courtesy allowed. As he is waking along, in a hurry, "thunk." He trips, falls into the dirt.



He looks to see what he tripped over and sees the corner of a chest sticking up among the weeds. He begins to dig, getting more excited as each handful of dirt is pulled away from his find.



Beneath the surface he finds a chest, a chest filled with gold coins issued in Rome 70 years ago, a secret, he realizes, that died with a wealthy man, the previous landowner. He buries the treasure deep and marks the spot and skipping to the city, he decides he will sell all he has and will

buy the field. He doesn't want to steal. Filled with new focus he works toward his goal.

The parable of the hidden treasure. Just in case the crowds and his disciples missed the first story, Jesus reiterates the story with the parable of the pearl of great price.

Men willing to sell all they had in order to possess the treasure they had discovered. Jesus tells them that the Kingdom of God is like such treasure, worth sacrificing everything to possess, and Jesus reminds them that this treasure is of eternal consequence...so listen closely. What is the treasure Jesus speaks of?

Like the three gifts the Wiseman brought the Christ child, this treasure of endless worth is comprised of three riches. These three riches are **Salvation, New Life, and Adoption.**

What exactly is the treasure, the pearl, Jesus speaks about? First, it is **Salvation.**

The Bible tells us, Romans 3:23, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* We have drunk from the dirty water of the world.

Paul quotes the Psalms, Romans 3: 10-12, ***“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”***

R.C. Sproul, in his commentary on Romans, writes, *“On numerous occasions in the teachings of Jesus we are told that at the final judgment there will be a profound silence. Why is that? When we stand before the judgment seat of God, the indictment against us will be so clear and the evidence so overwhelming that it would be futile, foolhardy, to even protest our innocence. The time for excuse-rendering, for explanations and rationalizations, will be over...”*

Sproul goes on to say, *“If I sin once, I cannot undo the transgression. I may try to compensate for it, make retribution for it, apologize for it; I can do all of those things, but I cannot undo it. I cannot make the imperfect, perfect.”*

“There is no one righteous, not even one...”

The Bible teaches us that God cannot allow the plague of sin to cross His shore. **God refuses to compromise the spiritual purity of heaven.**

So as imperfect, sinful, unrighteous individuals, we are lost.

We must understand this truth. R.C. Sproul writes, *“Why does Paul labour this point of the universality of human guilt? Is he one of those preachers who seems to enjoy wallowing in the corruption of the human race, giving us a bad self-image, paralyzing us with guilt feelings? This is not his intent at all. But it is impossible to really hear the gospel, until one has first heard the gavel crash and the verdict sounded unequivocally – Guilty! As long as we delude ourselves by attempts at self-justification, or try to make light of, deny, or shift to somebody else’s responsibility or blame, the sin that is a reality in our lives, we can never really hear the gospel. Unless we understand the justice of God, how can we possibly know anything of his mercy and grace.”*

This is the greatest treasure, worth sacrificing everything for, God’s mercy and grace as shown in His Son, Jesus Christ.



Christ died for us, took our place, allowed the sin we carry to be placed on Him and the punishment, separation from God (*for the plague of sin cannot cross God's shores*) to be His punishment. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*" He felt our punishment. He felt, in that moment, what it was like to be separated from His Heavenly Father. He felt, what you and I, if we choose to believe, will never have to feel.

Isaiah 53: 5-6 states, "***He was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped and we were healed. All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on Him the guilt and sins of us all.***"

Colossians 2: 13-14 – "***You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.***"

This is treasure worth selling everything for, worth sacrificing for, worth dying for.

Romans 10: 9-10 – "***If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.***"

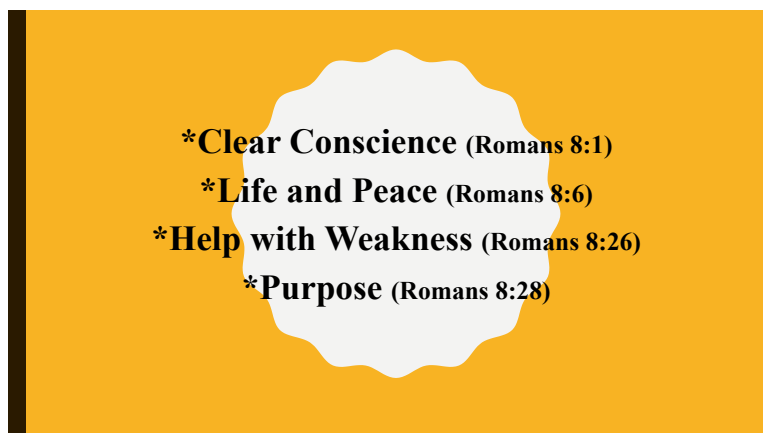
Our sins forgiven. Grace. Salvation. A treasure of endless worth, one we cannot earn, one we do not deserve.

But this treasure Jesus speaks of is so much more. Secondly, it's **New Life**.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – ***“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”***

John 10:10 (The Message) – ***“I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”***

What are some of the gifts of this New Life available to us...





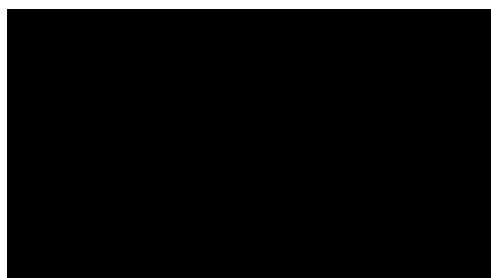
When we open this treasure, we find the strength to break addictions, to forgive the unforgivable, to love the unlovable, to achieve the unthinkable. We find peace in the midst of chaos, comfort in the midst of grief, confidence in the midst of weakness, and joy in the midst of sorrow. We find the strength to change, to be different tomorrow than we are today, to be more tomorrow than we are today, to make more of an impact on this world tomorrow than we are making today. When we open this treasure, we begin to discover, we find life, and life abundant.

But there is even more. Thirdly, this treasure, is **Adoption**.

Romans 8: 14-16 (The Message) – *“So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go! This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike ‘What's next, Papa?’ God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance!”*

Galatians 4: 4-7 (The Message) – *“But when the time arrived that was set by God the Father, God sent his Son, born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law so that he might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law. Thus, we have been set free to*

experience our rightful heritage. You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, 'Papa! Father!' Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are a child, you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance."



Those of us who open this treasure, who sacrifice all to have it, who believe in the Son, we have adoption as children of God.

In Max Lucado's book, Come Thirsty, Lucado talks about a little girl, Carinette, who lives at the Cape Haitian orphanage. Lucado talks about how Carinette, though she may appear similar to the other kids in the orphanage on the outside, is very different. She lives in a world called "home-to-be." She has been adopted and will soon be picked up to go to her new home.

Lucado writes, "*Carinette's situation mirrors ours. Our Father paid us a visit too. Have we not been claimed? Adopted? 'So, you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family – calling him 'Father, dear Father' (Romans 8:15).*

Lucado goes on to explain that, like Carinette, we are adopted but not transported. We are caught between what is and what will be. No longer orphans but also not yet home and every day brings us closer to that home, that completed adoption. This is where our joy comes from, joy in the midst of trials and hardship.

Lucado writes, *“I’ve been known to let a day, even two, pass without a glance to the eastern sky. Let’s do better. ‘Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth’ (Colossians 3:2). Don’t you know Carinette’s home-to-be dominates her thoughts.”*

We are called to live unafraid of death, joyful, for we *“wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom from death and decay...we must wait patiently and confidently...”* (Romans 8).

May our future home dominate our thoughts as our lives show thanks for this gift God has blessed us with.

A treasure worth sacrificing everything for. A treasure filled with **Salvation, New Life, and Adoption** papers.

Will you dig up and open this treasure? Will you sacrifice for it? Would you be willing to give up all you have to possess it? Will you allow such treasure to change your life, change your focus? Will you, through Jesus Christ, embrace the Kingdom of God in your life? Will you simply open your heart and receive it?

No earthly treasure compares.