

KINGDOM. LESSON 11

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God’s kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] 2 SAMUEL 2, 5, 6 and 7
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your personal times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (2 Samuel chapters 2, 5, 6 and 7). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN ROMANS] (5) ROMANS 3:28
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Review two by two.

(5) **Romans 3:28**. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) [THE PARABLES OF JESUS] THE HIDDEN TREASURE and THE PEARL OF GREAT VALUE
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**“The parable of the hidden treasure” in Matthew 13:44
and “the parable of the pearl of great value” in Matthew 13:45-46 are parables about
THE COST OF ENTERING GOD KINGDOM.**

“A parable” is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It is a true-to-life story or illustration designed to teach a spiritual truth. Jesus used the commonplace and the events of everyday to illumine the mysteries of the kingdom of God and to confront people with the reality of their situation and their need for renewal.

We will study this parable by using the six guidelines for studying parables (See manual 9, supplement 1).

A. THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Read Matthew 13:44.

1. Understand the natural story of the parable.

Introduce. The parable is told in figurative language and the spiritual meaning of the parable is based on that. Therefore we will first study the words and the cultural and historical facts of the background of the story.

Discuss. What are the true-to-life elements of the story?

Notes.

The picture is of a man who, while digging in a field, *unexpectedly* came upon a treasure hidden in the ground. The story does not tell us who buried the treasure or why it was buried there. But due to wars and burglars, people often did not have a secure place to store their valuables. So someone would at times put a part or all his precious possessions in a chest and bury them somewhere in his field. This particular person may have died before informing anyone about his treasure.

Someone else now owned the field. The digger unexpectedly found this treasure. The story does not tell us why he was digging in a field that did not belong to him. One possibility was that he rented that field as a sharecropper. The man did not want to steal the treasure. He realised that in order to claim legal ownership of the treasure, he must first of all own the field. So, he covered the treasure up again. He went and sold everything he possessed in order to buy that field. He did not mind in the least that it cost everything he possessed, so delighted was he to obtain possession of the treasure.

2. Examine the immediate context and determine the elements of the parable.

Introduce. The context of “the story” of the parable may consist of “the setting” and “the explanation or application” of the parable. The setting of the parable may state the *occasion* for telling the parable, or describe *the circumstances* at the

time of telling the parable. The setting is usually found *before* the story of the parable and the explanation or application is usually found *after* the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. What is the setting, the story and the explanation or application of this parable?

Notes.

(1) The setting of this parable is contained in Matthew 13:36-43.

The parable is told immediately after Jesus' explanation of the parable of the weeds among the wheat. Therefore we conclude that this parable was not spoken to the crowds, but only to the disciples. The purpose of this parable was to reveal and not to conceal (cf. Matthew 13:10-13)!

(2) The story of this parable is contained in Matthew 13:44.

(3) The explanation or application.

Jesus does not explain the parable. The parable must therefore be interpreted from the story itself and its context (See C).

3. Identify the relevant and irrelevant details of the parable.

Introduce. Jesus did not intend every detail in the story of the parable to have some spiritual significance. The relevant details are those details in the story of the parable that reinforce the central point or main theme or lesson of the parable. Therefore, we should not ascribe independent spiritual significance to every detail of the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. Which of the details in this parable are really essential or relevant?

Notes.

The kingdom of God. In general the kingdom of God is the kingship or sovereign reign of God over everyone and everything, from eternity to eternity (Psalm 24:1; 145:13). In particular, the kingdom of God is the kingship or sovereign reign of God through Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). The kingdom is based on the completed work of salvation of Christ (Acts 2:36) and the application of that work in believers through the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). The kingdom is recognised in the hearts of believers (Luke 17:20-21) and operative in their lives. The kingdom of God is manifested in four visible areas: in the complete salvation of believers from beginning to end (Mark 10:25-26), the constitution of believers as one Church on earth (Matthew 16:18-19), the good works (influence) of believers in every aspect of human society (Matthew 25:34-40), and finally in the redeemed universe or the new heaven and the new earth at the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

Thus, the kingdom of God becomes visible when a person is saved, becomes an active member of a Christian congregation (house fellowship or house church) and serves in one of the many possible ministries in God's kingdom. Whenever Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is *like* ..." he wants to teach what happens during the reign of God now on earth and what will certainly happen when the reign of God in its final phase is unfolded at the second coming of Jesus Christ. On the final judgement day, events described in the parables will certainly have taken place. This means that people living today are included in the events described in the parables! Each parable of Jesus Christ has a message for you and me today!!!

The treasure. The treasure is the essential detail in this parable, because it represents *the kingdom of God and its incalculable value*.

The field. Some interpreters say that "the field" represents the Bible, but this cannot be the case, for reading the Bible is not the only way of discovering the kingdom of God! For example, the apostle Paul was not reading the Bible when he found the kingdom of God. When God leads a sinner to the discovery of the kingdom of God or salvation, he employs all kinds of ways and methods. Therefore, "the field" is only a part of the story and this detail should not be given any particular meaning.

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Introduce. The main message (central theme) of the parable is found either in the explanation or application or from the story itself. From the way Jesus Christ himself explained or applied the parables, we know how we should interpret parables. A parable normally has only one main theme (message), one main lesson, one central point to make. Therefore, we should not try to find a spiritual truth in every detail of the story, but instead look for the one main lesson.

Discuss. What is the main message of this parable?

Notes.

The parable of the hidden treasure in Matthew 13:44 is a parable about "the cost of entering God's kingdom."

The main message of the parable is the following. "The kingdom of God is so precious a treasure that a person who obtains it is willing to give up whatever could interfere with obtaining it."

The value of entering God's kingdom is worth every sacrifice. The treasure in the field is far more worth than the price paid for the field. "God's kingdom" is the reign of God in the heart and life of a Christian. "Entering God's kingdom" means being saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Mark 10:24-26; Acts 16:31) and in this way submitting to

God's sovereign reign in one's life. Obtaining or entering God's kingdom is far more valuable than anything one possesses or does.

Entering the kingdom of God is one of the basic characteristics of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God. It is absolutely essential for salvation. The genuine people of God's kingdom are willing to enter the kingdom of God, that is, to surrender themselves and their whole life to Jesus Christ.

5. Compare the parable with parallel and contrasting passages in the Bible.

Introduce. Some parables are similar to one another and can be compared. However, the truth in all the parables has parallel or contrasting truth taught in other passages of the Bible. Try to find the most important cross-references that help us to interpret the parable. Always check the interpretation of a parable with the direct clear teaching of the Bible.

Discover and discuss. How do these passages illustrate the discovery and the entering of the kingdom of God?

Notes.

John 1:45-51. Nathanael discovered the treasure of God's kingdom when Philip told him that they had found the Messiah. First, Nathanael was sceptical and doubtful and did not think that anything good could come from Galilee. Philip challenged him "to come and see". When Jesus told Nathanael that he had been sitting under a fig tree before Philip called him, he realised that Jesus was the Messiah. Nathanael *gave up his scepticism and doubts* in order to become a follower of Jesus Christ. That was the cost of entering God's kingdom for him.

John 4:1-40. The Samaritan woman discovered the treasure of God's kingdom when Jesus met her at the well. First, she avoided the truth about her sinful life by changing the subject of discussion. But when Jesus told her that he was the Messiah, she could no longer flee away from her real sinful life. The Samaritan woman *gave up her fear of being discovered and shame for her past sins* in order to become a follower of Jesus Christ. That was the cost of entering God's kingdom for her.

John chapter 9. The man born blind discovered the treasure of God's kingdom when Jesus healed his blindness. First, he had been a Jew and a member of the synagogue. The Jews were speculating that he was blind either because he or his parents had committed some sin. But when Jesus said that he was blind in order that the work of God might be displayed in his life, he realised that Jesus was the Light of the world. The man born blind was *willing to be thrown out of the synagogue and to be publicly insulted by the religious leaders of his country* in order to become a follower of Jesus Christ. That was the cost of entering God's kingdom for him.

Acts 9:1-19; Philipians 3:7-9.

The apostle Paul discovered the treasure of God's kingdom when Jesus met him personally on the way to Damascus. First, Paul persecuted Christians by putting them into prison or by casting his vote to put them to death. But when he met Jesus Christ, he realised that he himself was a wicked sinner and that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah and Saviour of the world. The apostle Paul was *willing to immediately surrender his high position in Israel as a Pharisee and probably as a member of the Sanhedrin* in order to become a follower of Jesus Christ. He stopped his persecution, took the side of Jesus Christ and preached the gospel to his own people and to many others. That was the cost of entering God's kingdom for him.

Acts 16:25-34. The jailer of the prison in Philippi discovered the treasure of God's kingdom when he saw that an earthquake opened the prison doors. First, he wanted to kill himself, but when he realised that none of the prisoners had escaped, he wanted to know how he could obtain salvation. The jailer was *willing to immediately do what was right and openly care for the wounds and needs of his prisoners* in order to become a follower of Jesus Christ. That was the cost of entering God's kingdom for him.

B. THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT VALUE

Read Matthew 13:45-46.

1. Understand the natural story of the parable.

Discuss. What are the true-to-life elements of the story?

Notes.

The picture is of a wholesale merchant seeking for the very best pearl. Pearls were a precious possession. Only the very rich people could afford to buy them. Especially the pearls, which came from the Persian Gulf or from the Indian Ocean, were fabulously priced, far beyond the purchasing power of the average person. A wholesale merchant was dissatisfied with the pearls he had been able to obtain up to the present. So he searched everywhere for the very best pearl. Finally his search was successful. He found one pearl of very great value. The merchant wanted this pearl. So he bought it. But in order to do this, he had to sell all his possessions.

2. Examine the immediate context and determine the elements of the parable.

Discover and discuss. What is the setting, the story and the explanation or application of this parable?

Notes.

(1) The setting of this parable is contained in Matthew 13:36-43.

It is told immediately after Jesus' explanation of the parable of the weeds among the wheat. Therefore we conclude that this parable was not spoken to the crowds, but only to the disciples. The purpose of this parable was also to reveal and not to conceal (cf. Matthew 13:10-13)!

(2) The story of this parable is contained in Matthew 13:45-46.

(3) The explanation or application.

Jesus does not explain the parable. The parable must therefore be interpreted from the story itself and its context (See C).

3. Identify the relevant and irrelevant details of the parable.

Discover and discuss. Which of the details in this parable are really essential or relevant?

Notes.

The merchant seeking the pearl. "The merchant" is the essential detail in this parable, because he represents *the person diligently seeking* the kingdom of God. He represents any person who is seeking diligently for the highest good in life and when he has found it, is willing to surrender everything he has in order to obtain it.

Pearl. "The pearl" represents *the kingdom of God* and its incalculable value. It is a relevant detail. According to other Bible passages "pearls" represent something holy and very valuable. For example, in Matthew 7:6, Jesus warns his hearers "not to throw their pearls to pigs (that is, people who do not value pearls), because if they do, the pigs would trample the pearls under their feet and then turn and tear them to pieces." Jesus teaches people not to waste their proclamation of the gospel concerning the kingship of Jesus Christ on people who persist in rejecting their preaching (Matthew 10:14-15,23). And Paul warns the church against appointing an elder that is not qualified (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Discuss. What is the main message of this parable?

Notes.

The parable of the pearl of great value in Matthew 13:45-46 is a parable about "the cost of entering God's kingdom."

The main message of the parable is the following. "The kingdom of God is so precious a possession that a person who obtains it is willing to give up whatever may be inconsistent with it."

The value of entering God's kingdom is worth every sacrifice. The pearl of great value is worth far more than everything the merchant possesses. The kingdom of God" is the recognition that the kingship or lordship of God in the heart and life is the highest good there is. "I said to the LORD, 'You are my LORD; apart from you I have no good thing' (Psalm 16:2). "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25). "Entering God's kingdom" means being saved through faith in Jesus Christ and in this way submitting to God's sovereign reign in one's life.

Entering God's kingdom is one of the basic characteristics of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God. It is absolutely essential for salvation. The genuine people of God's kingdom give up whatever is necessary in order to submit to Christ and to dedicate yourself to him. In this way they enter God's kingdom.

5. Compare the parable with parallel and contrasting passages in the Bible.

Discover and discuss. How do these passages illustrate discovering and entering the kingdom of God?

Notes.

Mark 10:17-27. The rich young man had tried very hard to keep the whole law of God, yet did not know what to do in order to enter God's kingdom! When Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give it to the poor in order to become a follower of Jesus, he turned away from Jesus. *This rich man was unwilling to give up his great wealth that stood between him and becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.* That is why Jesus said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Acts 8:26-38. The Ethiopian official made a long, difficult and dangerous journey from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship the living God. He discovered the most precious pearl of God's kingdom after diligently searching for it in the Bible. He was reading in Isaiah 53. When Philip began with that passage of Scripture to tell him the good news about

Jesus, he believed. *This government official was willing to risk his high position as a political leader in order to read the Bible that taught him to become a follower of Jesus Christ.* That was the cost of entering God’s kingdom for him.

Acts 10:1-5,30-36. The military officer, Cornelius, discovered the most precious pearl of God’s kingdom after diligently searching for it in the religion of the Old Testament. He often prayed and gave gifts to the poor. When Peter preached the gospel to him and his relatives and close friends in his house, he believed in Jesus Christ. *This military official was willing to risk his high position as a military leader by accepting the message of the Bible in order to become a follower of Jesus Christ.* That was the cost of entering God’s kingdom for him.

Acts 16:14. The merchant in purple cloth, Lydia, discovered the most precious pearl of God’s kingdom after diligently searching for it in the religion of the Old Testament. She was sitting at the place of prayer at the river outside the city when Paul and his companions began to speak to her and the other women who were gathered there. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. *This merchant woman was willing to risk her trade and business in order to be a follower of Jesus Christ.* That was the cost of entering God’s kingdom for her.

Acts 17:10-12. Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism in Berea discovered the most precious pearl of God’s kingdom when they eagerly discussed with one another the message of the New Testament within the Old Testament. Paul had preached the word of God to them and afterwards they had examined the Scriptures every day for several days to see whether what Paul said was true. When they discovered that it was true, they believed in Jesus Christ. *These members of the Jewish synagogue, both men and women, risked suffering the persecution by the Jewish religious leaders and their fellow-countrymen in order to become followers of Jesus Christ.* That was the cost of entering God’s kingdom for these Jews and God-fearing Gentiles.

C. A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN TEACHINGS OF THE PARABLES CONCERNING THE COST OF ENTERING GOD’S KINGDOM

Discuss. What are the main teachings or messages of these parables? What did Jesus Christ teach us to *know* or to *believe* and what did he teach us to *be* or to *do*?

Notes.

(1) The main message. The main message of these two parables about “the hidden treasure” and “the pearl of great value” is the following: “The kingdom of God is so precious a treasure that a person must be willing to give up everything (also whatever stands in the way) in order to obtain the Kingdom.” The cost of entering God’s kingdom is to be willing to give up whatever could interfere with obtaining it or to give up whatever may be inconsistent with it. Things that might stand in the way of entering God’s kingdom may be one’s pride, ambitions, possessions, relationships or activities. If any of these stands in the way, it must be given up (cf. Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33)! Entering God’s kingdom is not simply an easy or cheap matter. The salvation of people had cost God the life of his only Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore entering the kingdom of God can never be a cheap matter for Christians (cf. Mark 8:31-38!).

(2) Discovering and obtaining or entering God’s kingdom is all that matters. Seeking God’s kingdom is the highest priority for man (Matthew 6:33). “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will given to you as well”

Nevertheless, there is a difference of emphasis between these two parables. “The parable of the hidden treasure” emphasises *the incalculable preciousness of salvation for those who discover it and obtain possession of it without even looking for it!* And “the parable of the pearl of great value” emphasises *the incalculable value of salvation for those who discover it and obtain possession of it after searching for it!* No matter, whether one discovers God’s kingdom or salvation unexpectedly or after searching diligently for it, the important thing is to receive it!

If you have not yet discovered God’s kingdom, start searching for it now! If you have been searching for God’s kingdom a long time, enter it now! Believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household”! The kingdom of God is worth more than anything you possess or do. The people who know where the treasure lies buried joyfully abandon everything else to secure it.

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[REACTIONS] PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD
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Take turns in the group **to pray short** to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two’s or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.

2. Preach, teach or study “the parable of the hidden treasure” and “the parable of the pearl of great value” together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **2 Samuel 11, 12, 13 and 24** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Daily **review** the last 5 memorised Bible verses from Romans.
5. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. **Romans 3:21-31**. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study. Make notes.
6. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. Update your notebook on preaching God’s kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.