

Timeless Classic #9 – The Gospel (Part One)

While I read professionally, it's not a hobby of mine to read novels very often. I think I lack the patience to read longer books, so a good short story is what I prefer - near instant gratification! The mark of a timeless classic short story is if it packs a punch that sticks with you throughout your life. Timeless Classic short stories like Edgar Allen Poe's, "The Tell Tale Heart," and Washington Irving's, "Rip Van Winkle," have always stuck with me. In our sermon lesson for today Jesus hits us with some timeless classic short stories that pack a punch and stick with you. The four short stories in our sermon lesson today all seek to do the same thing – encourage us to think and to act like the timeless classic doctrine of "The Gospel," is the greatest thing we have ever heard and the greatest possession that we will ever own and enjoy. "The Gospel" - the good news that the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation in Heaven is a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. Give your attention to Matthew 13:44-52.

⁴⁴ "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.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ 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. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied.

⁵² He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

The original plan today was to talk about all four short stories, but there is just too much there to do it justice in one sermon. So the new plan is to talk about short stories 1-2 this week and focus on short stories 3-4 next week. The short stories of Jesus in the Bible are called parables. A parable is an earthly story with a Heavenly meaning. When it comes to Jesus parables it is best not to press the details of the short story too much, but to simply take in the main truth that Jesus is trying to teach us. With that disclaimer, let's dig in to Jesus short stories.

“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” (vs. 44). I suppose if a wealthy person stumbled across treasure in a field there would be less excitement over the find. However, just think about how excited the non-wealthy person would be to find such buried treasure. From a spiritual perspective, the person who doesn't consider their sins to be that big of a deal or doesn't consider religion to be overly important or doesn't believe that there is a Heaven or a Hell – that person isn't going to see their need for Jesus and they won't be excited to hear the Gospel. However, the person who is bothered by their sins and is repentant of their sins and is concerned about what is going to happen to them in the afterlife – that person is going to be excited to hear the Gospel. And God the Holy Spirit will use the Gospel to bring them to faith in Jesus as their Savior so that person can enjoy the whole treasure chest filled with the blessings Jesus won for them through his perfect life, innocent death, and powerful resurrection. The person who is bothered by and sorry for their sins finds great joy and peace in knowing that through Jesus God forgives them of all their wrongdoing. The person who is uncertain of what is going to happen to them in the afterlife finds great excitement and confidence in knowing that through Jesus they will spend eternity in Heaven because God gives it to you as a free gift.

That is the main truth of this short story, but let's also consider briefly some other nuances in this story. Notice the treasure was hidden. A person doesn't naturally know the Gospel. The conscience and the created universe tell us there is a God, but those sources of information do not tell us about the Gospel. The Gospel is only revealed to a person as they read the Bible or have the message of the Bible shared with them by others. Even then, it's only when God the Holy Spirit works faith in a person that the Gospel isn't hidden any longer. And while the message of the Gospel is hidden, it is not impossible to find. It is in a field. Not high on a mountain or at the bottom of the ocean where only a few people, with special equipment, can find it. The point is that the message of the Gospel is accessible to the world. You will also notice that the man hid the treasure he found, sold his possessions, and bought the field. Remember the disclaimer on Jesus parables – don't press the details too much. As we study the rest of Scripture we know that Jesus isn't teaching us here that we should keep the Gospel to ourselves, but rather he wants us to share this good news of peace, joy, and confidence with all people. And as we study the rest of Scripture we know that the Gospel is not something we buy with money or earn with our good deeds, but rather it is a free gift to us through faith in Jesus as Savior. Jesus point with this last phrase seems to be this – once a person understands the value of the Gospel and treasures its worth they will take the necessary steps – regular worship, Bible Study, prayer, and a focus on living a Christian life out of thankfulness for the gift of the Gospel so that the gift of the Gospel is never lost.

“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” (45-46). The main point of this short story of Jesus is the same as the treasure hidden in the field, but with Jesus using a different illustration. There are many different religious beliefs that are considered to be “pearls of wisdom.” In fact, the Mormon religion even considers the book, “The Pearl of Great Price,” to be divinely inspired and equal to the Bible. Many in this world believe Christianity is just one of many religions that lead to a right relationship with God and eternal life in Heaven. That is the lie of the Devil. Christianity is the only religion in the world that reveals the true message of the Bible, that forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation are a free gift from God through faith in Jesus as Savior. In this short story Jesus is giving us a warning to accept no substitutes to the Gospel message. In fact, through the Apostle Paul, Jesus supports his short story about the Gospel message being the true pearl of great value. **“Guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20-21).**

The timeless classic doctrine we focused on today is “The Gospel.” Recently a young NBA basketball player named Jonathon Isaac was interviewed and asked why he decided not to kneel during the national anthem and why he decided not to wear a Black Lives Matter t-shirt. He responded by saying, racism isn’t the only problem in the world. And wearing t-shirts and kneeling for the anthem aren’t going to solve the world’s problems. He followed that up by saying that the only solution to the world’s problems is the Gospel. In these short stories Jesus is encouraging us to have that same mindset. The only solution to the world’s problems and your problems is the Gospel. The only way to find true peace, true joy, true confidence now and for eternity is in the Gospel. Treasure the Gospel today and always. Amen.