**The kingdom of heaven is like…**

**Matthew 13:43-44**

**“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.” 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.**

We live in this pandemic season that we never ever experienced before. We have been experiencing challenges and radical changes in regards to social life. Many people are wondering about uncertain future. As I meditated on the passage relating to Thanksgiving Sunday, I thought about the fundamental reason to give thanks to God as a Christian. Especially in this pandemic, I took some time to ponder upon the value of the Kingdom of God which will never perish. May God renew our hope in the kingdom of heaven and restore our heart and mind to possess the true value in God’s kingdom.

**The hidden treasure and a fine pearl.**

Look at verse 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.”**

Hiding treasure in a field was common in Jesus’ time. People today put their money in savings and loans, or invest in stocks. They keep other valuables typically locked away in safe boxes. However, people in Jesus’ time had no such banks or secure boxes to keep their treasures. Hence rich people buried their valuables to their fields in order to secure them. But the treasures were forgotten when battles and wars broke out in that land. During the course of wars, the landowner had been changed again and again. So here is a man who was working in a field. Both the man and the owner of a field didn’t know the existence of the treasure. In this parable, the man found the treasure and put it right back in the ground. Then he sold everything he had and bought the entire field just so that he would have undisputed ownership of that treasure. That is the point of the parable: A man found something so valuable that he sold everything he owned in order to get it. He was so overjoyed, so overwhelmed by the value of his discovery that he was eager to surrender everything he had in order to gain that treasure.

Look at verse 45, 46 **“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.**

The second parable makes the same point. This man was likely a wholesaler. He would travel from city to city, searching through markets, fishing ports, looking for high-grade pearls to buy for resale. In Jesus’ time, pearls were the equivalent of diamonds today. Well-formed pearls were as valuable as any precious gem. A single pearl of perfection in size and beauty could be of immense value. This merchant sought fine pearls to sell because they were a reliable investment; they increased in value as time went by.

The first man sold everything and bought one field. The second man sold everything and bought one pearl. These two simple parables make a point of the nature of the Kingdom of heaven.

**First, The kingdom of God is priceless in value.** In Christ and His kingdom we have an eternal treasure that is rich beyond comparison. This treasure is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, eternal, and reserved in heaven for believers as 1 Peter 1:4 states about the living hope in the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the realm where Christ graciously rules over his people. The citizens of God’s kingdom will be enjoying eternal peace, love and joy in the glory of the eternal Father. Revelation 21 describes how the kingdom of heaven would look like. Do you know what material is for the streets in the city of God? It is gold as pure as transparent glass. The city walls and gates are decorated with all kinds of precious gems and stones. There is no sun or moon because there is no darkness at all. God’s glory always shines upon his city eternally. The kingdom of God is the heavenly treasure hidden in the field of this corrupt, sinful and cursed world. It is a great prize for those who found and possessed it to get out of their spiritual bankruptcy.

**Second, the kingdom of God is not visible.** A treasure was hidden in the field and the pearl had to be sought. Both a farmer and a merchant were not the casual observer in the passage. The treasure must be buried deep in a field but a farmer somehow found it. A merchant must have made tremendous effort until he found the fine one. Spiritual treasure cannot be naturally perceived. 1 Corinthians 2:14 reads, **“The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.” John 3:3 says “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”** So the kingdom and its true worth remain hidden from the person without the Spirit. They do not understand why some people are passionate about serving the Lord wholeheartedly sacrificing their time, wealth and youth for the glory of God. They don’t understand seeking for the joy of serving the Lord instead seeking for the joy of this world. When I was a beginner of the Bible study, I had trouble in my heart to hear the mission report from missionaries. They sacrificed a lot to pioneer campuses and to feed God’s flock of sheep. I thought to myself, “Isn’t it too much to serve the gospel work like them? So I didn’t want to be a missionary. But after I was born of the Spirit, my view and value system was completely converted. I found the true treasure in Jesus and the spiritual values became so real to me. Blessed are those who can see and estimate the value of the kingdom of heaven.

**Third, God’s kingdom needs to be possessed.** In both parables, a man and a merchant purchased treasures after finding. They owned them by selling everything they had. Eternal life is free to the repentant sinners; it is a gift received by faith alone, not a reward to be earned or purchased by works. Then what does it mean to possess the heavenly treasure? In order to possess the genuine treasure in heaven, we must surrender what we had before. You may find the treasure knowing the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection and the way of salvation in him. The authentic faith does not remain in finding the treasure in Jesus. We must take the follow-up action to go and sell everything that we had before to make the treasure ours. We see some people in the Bible who failed to possess the treasure in heaven. A rich young man sought for eternal life in Jesus, but he didn’t want to sell everything that he had. Jesus mentioned many times about the cost of entering into the kingdom of heaven. Finding treasure is one thing but actually possessing the treasure is quite another. It involves our total surrender of our old sinful life and our commitment to follow Jesus at any cost. Does that sound difficult to possess the treasure in heaven? Yes it is difficult as Jesus stated; **“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”**

However I would like to observe the attitude of the man who sold everything to possess the treasure. It was his joy to sell everything in order to buy the field with the buried treasure. The joy of finding the immense treasure and the joy of his bright future in compensation of what he sold out enabled him to give up everything he had. Christian power and strength to possess the Kingdom of heaven come from the overwhelming joy that is not comparable to anything. Have you experienced this joy?

I have a conviction that the Kingdom of God is real and the fiery hell is real as well. Those who find the treasure and possess them will enter into the kingdom of God and live forever in the glory of God. Those who do not find and possess the treasure will be suffering forever in the dark place.

As I undergo this pandemic, I realize how hopeless this world is. Actually this world is heading to the end and we will see more often terrible disasters, diseases and wars all over the world just as the birth pain gets worse and worse until the due hour. As I examine myself in the words of God, I must restore the heavenly joy in Jesus. The kingdom of heaven is my true hope and source of real joy. I thank God for revealing the treasure in heaven to us through his son Jesus Christ. I also thank God for providing me the eternal joy and peace through his kingdom in me and in heaven. Today let us renew our hope and joy as we ponder upon the value of heavenly treasure and have a quality time of giving thanks to God.