Parables of a Hidden Treasure and a Valuable Pearl



Scripture Reference: Matthew 13:44-46

Suggested Theme: The Kingdom of God is more precious than anything considered valuable in this world.

Memory Verse: “The thing you should want most is God’s Kingdom and doing what God wants. Then all these other things you need will be given to you.” Matthew 6:33, ICB

Story Overview:

Jesus told two parables to explain the value of the Kingdom of God. The first parable was about a man who found a treasure in a field. He put the treasure back into the ground and then sold everything he had to buy the field. The second parable was about another man who found a precious and valuable pearl. This man also sold everything he had to buy this one pearl.

Background Study:

Information about teaching the Parables

Children love to hear about treasure. Actually, adults like to hear about treasure, too! Jesus must have caught his audience’s attention when he began talking about a man finding a buried treasure.

The man in the parable somehow stumbled across a treasure. He did not own the field where he found it, so maybe he was in the process of doing work for someone. He might have been planting or constructing some sort of building. Whatever he was doing, it must have been a wonderful surprise to find a treasure.

The treasure might have been a clay jar full of money. People sometimes hide their money this way to keep it safe from thieves. If the person were to die without telling anyone where the money was buried, then someone else might find it someday. This might have been the kind of treasure that the man in the parable found.

There was no doubt in this man’s mind that the treasure he found was worth everything he owned. The scripture said he joyfully sold everything he had so he could buy the field. When we truly realise the worth of our salvation, we will joyfully give up everything to serve God. Anything that we give up will be nothing in comparison to the treasure of God.

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The man stumbled upon the treasure. Some people come to God that way. They might accept a friend's invitation to worship one day. Or some situation (like an illness or the death of a loved one) might suddenly lead them to God.

Other people might search for God for a long time. They know that there is something missing in their life, and they try to figure out how to fill the void. They may search the Scriptures or "try-out" different types of faiths or churches. Finally, they find the truth and become a Christian. This kind of searching is what happened to the merchant in the second parable.

A merchant would be experienced in riches. He would constantly be looking for treasures so he could buy and sell them. The merchant in this parable probably already had a lot of wealth. When he found this one precious pearl, he recognised its value. He was willing to sell everything he owned to buy this pearl.

Children learn from the examples of adults in their lives. Do they ever see us treat earthly things like treasures? Do they constantly hear us talk about money and debts and purchases? As teachers, it is important to examine our own value systems. Is He the most important thing in my life? Do I put Him above everything on this earth? How hard would it be to give up any of my possessions, relationships, or plans to follow God? Would I joyfully give them up? Remember that this parable is not just for children; it is for you and me.

Some Scriptures to help in your study: Psalm 19:9-10; Proverbs 2:1-5; Luke 18:18-30.

Other Scriptures about the Kingdom of God: Matthew 6:33; Colossians 1:13; Luke 16:16; Mark 10:15; John 18:36; James 2:5.

Way to Introduce the Story:

(Before you gather the children, hide a "treasure" box of candy coins – or any prizes they can keep when they find the box.) After the children have found the "treasure," show them something of great value (perhaps your ring, other jewellery, or even money). Alternatively, you could find books or magazines and show pictures of valuable items. Ask the children what they would trade for the treasures you are showing. "In the bible, we can read a story that Jesus told. The story is about two men who find treasures."

The Story:

Jesus told His followers many parables about the Kingdom of God. Do you know what a kingdom is? A kingdom is a place where everyone does what the king says. If you live in the Kingdom of God, then that means you do what God says. That is because God is the King.

The Kingdom of God is not a place. It is a way of thinking and acting. Jesus taught people about the real King of the Universe who loves everyone. He wants everyone to follow Him and live in His Kingdom, no matter where they live.

- If you live in New Zealand and do what God says, then you live in the Kingdom of God.
- If you live in Australia and do what God says, then you live in the Kingdom of God.
- If you live in Japan and do what God says, then you live in the Kingdom of God.
- Where do you live? (Let children answer.) Do you obey God? (Let the children answer.) If you obey God, then you live in the Kingdom of God!

Sometimes, kingdoms can be rich and beautiful. The king might own all kinds of treasures and have lots of money. Jesus told his followers that the Kingdom of God is richer and more valuable than any treasure in the whole world.

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Jesus thought this might be difficult for the people to understand, so He told them a parable. A parable is a simple story that helps people understand a very important thing. Here is the parable:

Once, a man was working in a field. As he was digging in the dirt, he uncovered a treasure that someone had left there. The man was so excited that he buried the treasure back up and went back home to get some money to buy the field. He did not have enough money, so he sold everything that he owned. He was happy to do this. Now, he had enough money, so he went and bought the field. Then, the treasure was his.

What do you think Jesus' parable meant? The Kingdom of God is like the treasure. When we find the Kingdom of God, we are so happy that we will give up everything so that we can obey the King. We are happy to do this because God is the King of the Kingdom.

- If we used to swear/curse, then we would give that up so we could obey God, the King.
- If we used to steal things, then we would give them up so that we could obey God- the King.
- Even if our best friend tries to stop us from obeying God then we would give up our best friend to obey the King and be in the Kingdom of God.

Nothing is more valuable than the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a treasure!

Jesus told another parable to help the people understand the Kingdom of God:

Once, there was a pearl merchant who looked for valuable pearls. When he found good pearls, he would buy them at a low price and then sell them at a higher price to make money. The pearl merchant was always looking for the finest pearls.

One day, the pearl merchant found one very valuable pearl. It was the most beautiful pearl he had ever seen. He knew that he had to have that pearl! The merchant sold everything he had so he could have enough money to buy the pearl.

What do you think that parable meant? What do you think the pearl was like? (Let the children answer). The precious pearl is like the Kingdom of God. The pearl merchant gave up everything he had to own the precious pearl. The Kingdom of God is so valuable that we will want to give up everything to be in it.

What would you give up to be in the Kingdom of God?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- In the parable, what did the man find hidden in a field? (Treasure)
- What did the man do after he found the treasure? (He hid it in the field again, and then bought the field)
- In the parable, why did the merchant sell everything he had? (He sold everything to buy a very valuable pearl)
- What is a lesson of the Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Parable of the Pearl? (The Kingdom of God is a treasure and more valuable than anything in the world)

Reflection:

- What is a pearl?
- What does a pearl look or feel like?
- Why do you think the man in the story hid the treasure once he found it?
- What does it mean for something to be 'valuable'?
- What do you value?
- Have you ever been exploring and found something? What did you do with what you found?
- The men in the parable sold everything they had for the treasure and the pearl that he found. Would you sell everything for the treasure or pearl?
- Jesus said the Kingdom of God was very valuable and worth everything. What do you think the kingdom of God is?
- What makes the kingdom of God valuable?
- Would you give everything up to live in the kingdom of God?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- My God is So Big Song
- Goodbye World Song
- Our God is an Awesome God Song
- You Are My All In All
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

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- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Have children rewrite the parable using items of value to them. The treasure might be a million dollars or a huge diamond.
- Print out this worksheet that compares earthly values with things God values.
  - Print on A4-sized paper
  - Print on Letter-size paper
- Use the "Crayon Resist" method to tell the story. Instructions here.
- For review, let the children choose a "treasure" out of a treasure box when they answer a question correctly.
- Ring a jeweller and find out how much pearls cost. Ask if they know the value of the world's most valuable pearls. Share the information with the class.
- Find out if your public library has good picture books about how pearls are formed. Bring the books to class to show the children.
- Play hangman using words from today's story (treasure, Matthew, pearl, merchant, etc.)
- Draw a vertical line down the centre of a chalk/whiteboard. Title one column with "God's Treasures" and title the other "People's Treasures." Ask the children to help you write items in each column. Discuss the value of each. Read Matthew 6:19-21. This application idea is called Drawing Contrasts.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Write "God is MY Treasure" at the top of a poster board or large piece of paper. Bring catalogues, magazines, real estate ads and automobile ads to class and let the children cut out pictures of valuable things. Glue all of the pictures onto the poster. Discuss as you work.
- Make a treasure box and decorate it with glitter, beautiful stones, and other embellishments. Write "God" inside the box.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and puzzle worksheets (Calvary Curriculum)
- Craft: Pearl on a seashell craft (sundayschoolcrafts.net)

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- Printable, Hidden Treasure crossword puzzle (sermons4kids.com)
- A collection of activities about the pearl of great price (sermons4kids.com)

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