

## QUEST FOR CAMELOT "KINGDOM VALUATION" MATTHEW 13:44-46

### This Week's Core Competency

**Single-mindedness** – I focus on God and his priorities for my life. Mathew 6:33, *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Linking the parable pair in Matthew 13:44-45 with single-mindedness is most apropos. The parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl underscore the supreme value of the kingdom of heaven, since the only characters in both sell everything they own to obtain it. What's more, linking this Core Competency to the parable pair provides an opportunity to examine more closely the sense of Matthew 6:33, a verse that stands in stark contrast to the previous verse. Verse 32 pictures people in anxious pursuit of life's everyday needs, while verse 33 pictures disciples in single-minded pursuit of "his kingdom and "his righteousness." Jesus' contrast points out while unbelievers will likely obtain the first, disciples will surely obtain both.

A closer study of the verse reveals that "seek" does not mean "look for" or "try to find" the kingdom, neither does it mean "try to establish" the kingdom. The nuance of the verb must be inferred from its context, which *compares* and *contrasts* what disciples seek and what pagans seek. One commentator explains: "In view of vv. 31-32, this verse makes it clear that Jesus' disciples are not

***The disciple's first and best effort is to be directed toward God's kingdom.***

– Leon Morris

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simply to *refrain* from the *pursuit* of temporal things as their primary goal in order to differentiate themselves from pagans. Instead, they are to *replace* such pursuits with goals of far greater significance. To seek first the kingdom ('of God' in some MSS) is to desire above all to enter into, submit to, and participate in spreading the news of [the kingdom] . . . to live so as to store up treasures in heaven in the prospect of the kingdom's consummation (D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 8:181-82). Another agrees; he puts it like this: "The command to seek relates directly to the Gentiles' seeking to obtain [*epizetousin*] life's necessities in 6:32, par. Luke 12:30. The admonition calls in this context for one's controlling drive, one's ultimate quest, to be the obtaining of the Kingdom, to worry [*merimnao*] and to seek [*zeteo*] are paired in tandem to refer to the total involvement of one's person in pursuit of a goal. Therefore, seek means to give oneself unreservedly to the pursuit of the kingdom" (Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 344).

Where the NIV has "his kingdom" other translations have "the kingdom of God" (cf., ESV, NKJV, GNT, HCSB, NLT)—either because "of God" is found in some important Greek manuscripts or simply because Jesus is clearly referring to the "kingdom of God," the same kingdom he refers to as the "kingdom of heaven" in Matthew 13. As was said in the study on Matthew 13:1-23, "kingdom of heaven" is an expression that has its roots in the book of Daniel, which declares that "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people" (2:44). The "kingdom of heaven" is that very

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kingdom. One commentator explains: "The phrase 'of heaven' does not mean that it is a mystical or spiritual kingdom, as opposed to a physical, earthly kingdom. It means that this kingdom is sent from God who is in heaven" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 2016 ed., 78, www.soniclight.com).

The adverb "first" can be construed in a couple of ways: 1) first *in a series*; 2) first *above all else*. The difference between the two nuances is explained nicely by one commentator. He writes: "If the term means the *first* in a series, it would imply a secondary softening of the contrast by implying that, after seeking the Kingdom, one then could seek to satisfy one's needs . . . If one takes *first* to mean *above all else*, then it functions to heighten the contrast between an anxious seeking of one's security and a seeking of the Kingdom . . . *first* [here] indicates an action whose priority is not one of a series but all-encompassing" (Guelich, 341-42). In other words, to "seek first his kingdom" entails giving it top billing, making it the *main thing* in life.

The term "righteousness" in the command to "seek first . . . his righteousness" raises an interesting question. Is Jesus referring to God's "righteousness" in the *judicial* sense of *right standing* before God or in the *ethical* sense of *right conduct* before God? While one might answer, both, e.g., "This will include the 'right standing' before God that comes about as the result of Christ' saving work and also the right conduct that befit the servant of God" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 162), it more likely refers to the second, e.g., "To seek God's righteousness is not, in this context, to seek justification. 'Righteousness' must be interpreted as in 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1. It is to pursue righteousness of life in full submission to the will of God, as prescribed by Jesus throughout this discourse" (Carson, 182).

A casual reading of Matthew 6:33, which takes it to mean "make your spiritual life one priority among many," blunts its point and drains its energy. A closer reading, however, pricks the reader's conscience and inspires action by commanding the single-minded investment of the one's whole life in the kingdom of heaven—praying for (6:10) and preparing for Christ's return and its consummation. The kingdom's sons and daughters (13:38) are both its members and partners. Membership has its privileges and partnership its responsibilities.

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Matthew 13:44-46

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.<sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

#### Cf. other translations

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,<sup>46</sup> who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (ESV)

44 "The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man happens to find a treasure hidden in a field. He covers it up again, and is so happy that he goes and sells everything he has, and then goes back and buys that field.

45 "Also, the Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man is looking for fine pearls, <sup>46</sup> and when he finds one that is unusually fine, he goes and sells everything he has, and buys that pearl. (GNT)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Underline "kingdom of heaven" in vv. 44, 45.
- \* Box "like" indicating *comparison* in vv. 44, 45.
- \* Circle "found" in v. 44.

- \* Bracket "hid it again" in v. 44.
- \* Circle "bought" in v. 44.
- \* Highlight "sold all he had" in v. 44.

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\* Box "again" indicating *continuity* in v. 45.

\* Highlight "sold everything he had" in v. 45.

\* Circle "pearls" in v. 45.

## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. To whom does Jesus tell the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl? What makes you think so?
2. *Compare* and *contrast* this pair of parables with the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast.
3. Describe what the kingdom of heaven is "like" in the first parable.
4. Put the point of that *comparison* in your own words.
5. Describe what the kingdom of heaven is "like" in the second parable.
6. Put the point of that *comparison* in your own words.
7. *Contrast* the two men in the two parables.
8. What do you make, if anything, of the *contrast*?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what we mean when we say, "the kingdom of heaven is priceless."

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## day 3

### EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The pair of parables in Matthew 13:44-45 are the shortest and simplest of all. In fact, they hardly deserve to be called parables in the traditional sense. They are more like long *similes*—figures of speech that compare the kingdom of heaven not to a *particular thing* but to a *particular situation or scenario*. For example, in the parable of the Hidden Treasure (v. 44), the kingdom of heaven is not like "treasure." It's like what a man did when he found the treasure.

The parables in the previous pair, the Mustard Seed and the Yeast, are short, but both are followed by remarks that suggest what they mean. For example, in the first case, Jesus says: "Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that birds of the air come and perch in its branches" (v. 32), suggesting its growth. And in the second case, he says: "until it worked all through the dough" (v. 33), suggesting its pervasive influence. But the parables in the second pair, the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl, are followed by nothing to suggest their meaning.

Perhaps nothing is required; perhaps their meaning is more or less obvious. Commentators agree that together the two make the same point: the kingdom of heaven is of inestimable value. In the parable of the Hidden Treasure, the man who stumbles upon the treasure sells all he has to buy the field so he can lift out the treasure. In the parable of the Pearl, the merchant who's looking for fine pearls sells everything he has to buy the finest pearl, so he can own it. In either case, the kingdom of heaven is deemed priceless, which appears to be Jesus' whole point.

But Jesus doesn't seem to have *entrance* into the kingdom as such in mind. His point is not that a person *gets in* through personal sacrifice. One commentator says: "Jesus was not teaching that entrance into the kingdom depended on self sacrifice; entrance depended on faith in Him" (Constable, 238). That's certainly what he told Nicodemus. A person enters the kingdom through the new birth, that is, by being "born of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:3, 5). What's more, Jesus told this pair of parables to the disciples, who were already "sons of the kingdom" (v. 38). Another commentator confirms: "The point is not on buying one's way into the kingdom but on recognizing its supreme value" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 488).

Jesus has the *cost* of being sons and daughters of the kingdom in mind. The kingdom of heaven is the greatest of treasures; its worth is immeasurable by any standard. Those who have entered it by faith know, in the words of one writer, "that the kingdom is a reality that is worth everything. And thus they joyfully make it their one priority in life (cf., 4:18-22; 10:39). They seek first the kingdom, sacrificing all to it, but at the same time paradoxically finding with the kingdom all they need (6:33)" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 397).

#### *The Message of the Passage*

*Because the kingdom of heaven is of inestimable value, "sons of the kingdom" consider forsaking everything to follow Christ a small price to pay as his disciples.*

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day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

**“Kingdom Valuation”**

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 44 **kingdom of heaven** I.e., the manifestation of the messianic kingdom in mystery form in the inter-advent age (see comments on p. 1).

v. 44 **like** Cf., "The kingdom of heaven is like this" (GNT). The word "like" typically introduces a *simile*, a figure of speech that uses *comparison*. The GNT recognizes that in this case "the kingdom of heaven" is not like "treasure" or like "a merchant" but like a *situation* or *scenario*. In the first parable it is like a man who sells all he has to buy a field in which treasure is hidden; in the second, it is like a man who sells everything he has to buy a valuable pearl. "On the 'like' language, see on v. 24. The kingdom is not simply like a treasure, but its situation is like the situation of a treasure hidden in a field" (Carson, 328).

v. 44 **a man . . . a merchant** Commentators typically comment on the two men in the two parables. For example, "Interestingly, in the parable of the pearl the man is searching for wealth, whereas in the parable of the hidden treasure the man stumbles across it . . . Jesus is reaching out to very person in his audience" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 224). Perhaps the two men constitute a *merism* of sorts, a figure of speech which represents totality by mention of two opposite or extreme parts, e.g., "You know when I *sit* and when I *rise*" (Ps 139:2) does not limit what God knows. Just the opposite; it implies God knows all of the psalmist's actions. Another common example is "I've been working night and day" to mean "I've been working all the time or constantly." If so, what is true for the two men is true for all men. The kingdom of heaven is of great value to all its sons and daughters (cf. 38).

v. 44 **found** "In a land as frequently ravaged as Palestine, many people doubtless buried their treasures; but, as Huffman (p. 213) points out, actually to find a treasure would happen once in a thousand lifetimes. Thus the extravagance of the parable dramatizes the supreme importance of the kingdom" (328). "If anyone did this [buried valuable possessions] before going off on a journey and failed to return, the possessions remained there and might be found later through a chance discovery like that in this parable. So too, in frequent wars, people would hide valuables to keep them from looting soldiers, and sometime the owners would not survive" (Morris, 359). In such situations, land could change hands several times without anyone being aware of the hidden treasure.

v. 44 **hid it again** In order to account for the detail that the man hid the treasure again after finding it, one commentator observes: "Derrett (*Law*, pp. 1-16) has pointed out that under rabbinic law if a workman came on a treasure in a field and lifted it out, it would belong to his master, the field's owner; but here the man is careful not to lift the treasure out till he has bought the field. So the parable deals with neither the legality nor the morality of the situation (as with the parable of the thief in the night) but with the value of the treasure, which is worth every sacrifice" (Carson, 328; see Morris, 359).

v. 44 **bought** "One must not interpret the buying of the treasure as an allegory for the atonement, as if Jesus were the treasure hunter purchasing our redemption" (Blomberg, 223; cf., J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Parables of Jesus*, 61).

v. 45 **pearls** "Pearls, it is worth noting, were very highly valued in the ancient world, more so than gold (cf. BAGD, 491b)" (Hagner, 397).

## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

This is our last week in the *Kingdom Quest* series. So far in our journey to raise kingdom-minded kids we have talked about how our kids become citizens of the Kingdom of God, how they live as citizens in His Kingdom and how to share His Kingdom with others. These are all valuable topics; however, much of that will become natural if our kids find their identity in God's Kingdom. We are constantly challenging our kids to live in the world but not be of the world (John 17:16). What does that mean? As believers we are no longer ruled by sin or the standards of this world. We are not to conform to the patterns and expectations of the culture. We are free to live as overcomers, set apart and holy. The fact that we are still here on this earth means we are living as ambassadors of our higher kingdom. Kingdom-minded kids are learning to see the world through their kingdom lenses. It means we respond in love instead of anger or hate. It means our speech and actions look different than the world's. It means we respond in generosity to needs around us. It means we guard what we let come into our minds through our eyes and ears. Raising kingdom-minded kids in this world is hard! However, fellow parent, if we aren't intentional about it, our kids will default to learning from the world.

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Matthew 13:44-46

1. What is the kingdom of heaven compared to in verse 44?
2. What does the man do when he finds the treasure?
3. What do these verses say about the value of God's Kingdom?

### What Do You Think

1. What is the most valuable thing you own?
2. How do you treat it?
3. Do you treat your relationship with Jesus with the same care?

### What R U Going To Do

This is the last week of our memory verses, Psalm 47:7-8. Draw a picture illustrating the verses. Write both verses on it and hang it in your room to remind you who your king is!

### Core Comp

Single-mindedness - I pay attention to what God thinks is important to my life.

### Memory Verse

Psalm 47:8 - *God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.*

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-six years and have one son, Zach.

**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.  
Ft. Worth, TX 76120  
1-866-PANTEGO  
Fax 817-275-6403  
[www.pantego.org](http://www.pantego.org)

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).