

July 30, 2017 Mt. 13: 44-52 & 1 Kgs. 3:5, 7-12

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

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Stone, Naomi. [What is Your Guiding Star?](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Pearl of Great Price and its Cost](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[U tube link](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Wayne Mueller in his book titled Sabbath asks: "What if our life, roughhewn from the stuff of creation, orbits around a God who never ceases to create new beginnings? What if our life is simply a time when we are blessed with both sadness and joy, health and disease, courage and fear – and all the while we work, pray, and love, knowing that the Promised Land we seek is already present in the very gift of life itself, the inestimable privilege of a human birth? What if this single human life is itself the jewel in the lotus, the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price? What if all the way to heaven is heaven?"

Once again we enter into a string of parables, only found in Matthew that Jesus used to try to explain the kingdom of heaven. In other words, what is it like in God's reality? It is hidden in the field of our life. It is found in our search for that perfect something. It is caught in our attempts to make a living. It comes

after a lifetime of storing up wisdom. All these examples suggest that it happens while we are going about our daily lives doing our ordinary things. It comes as a surprise, a gift. We often say, I got more out of the experience than I gave. This is the Spirit's way. Living as Jesus taught has built into it the surprise gift. We only have to try it, as the post Pentecost disciples did, and saw that it really worked.

Mt. 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**."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What 'treasure' are you willing to give up everything in order to obtain?

PRAYER:

Teacher, once again you talk about the kingdom of heaven. You reach for all kinds of ways to help me get a grasp on what that means. Understanding what you are talking about will take a lifetime to discover, because just when I think I have got IT, somebody or something moves IT. Help me as I continue my search for that one thing of great value, that is, your understanding of God's love. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN / END OF THE AGE: Jesus' audience lived under intolerable burdens brought about by the religious and secular oppression. There was a feeling that change had to happen soon or there wasn't much use in going on. This often brings about "end of the world" types of thinking, and heightens the quest for what it will be like.

Do you see any similarities developing today? Do you know of people going off to hear some 'teacher' who seems to 'know' what everyone needs to do? If so, what is your response to them?

TREASURE /TREASURES: People often buried their treasures as they fled an approaching army, so that they could retrieve them when the danger was over. This led to discoveries of such treasures when they were unable to come back to reclaim them. There were even laws stipulating what the finder could legally claim and what they couldn't.

How do you feel about the person who went 'around the law' to take possession of what he found as he was doing his job? What does his behavior tell you about his estimation of what he found?

FIELD: The field was the place of work for the man who had no idea when he went out to work that day that he would encounter a treasure.

Have you ever found a 'treasure' in your work 'field'?

SOLD ALL / SOLD EVERYTHING: The response of the man and the merchant to their discoveries was total dedication to claiming what was found. Whatever it took to make the find their own they did it. (See m. B. Bat. 4. 8-9)

Have you ever been in that situation? If so, what happened?

FINE PEARLS: Pearls are what happens when an oyster surrounds an irritant with a substance that hardens into a beautiful object. The color, size and the shape determine the value of the pearl.

Have you ever surrounded an 'irritant' with enough understanding and love to turn it into a 'pearl'?

HID / FOUND: The one who hid the treasure was not the one who ultimately finds it.

Have you ever hid a treasure, hoping to come back to it later? Have you ever stumbled on a treasure that someone else left behind that helped you 'find' yourself?

MAN / MERCHANT / OWNER: The man wasn't looking for anything, the merchant was looking for something, and the owner had a storeroom full of things that he could take hold of as the situation demanded.

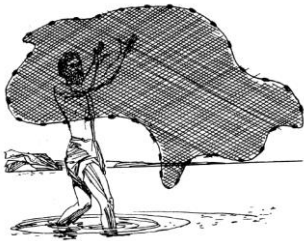
Which person do you identify with easiest? Why? Can each person represent a stage in the process of your life?

BOUGHT: To buy something it to exchange something of value for something you value or need even more.

Does this reading ask you to 'buy' something? If so, what will it cost you?

GREAT VALUE: Great value is a very subjective thing. What you value, another might not.

Are you on a quest for something you value greatly right now? If so, what is it? Why is it so valuable to you?



CAUGHT / NET / LET DOWN / PULLED IT UP: Jesus teaches that God gets involved with the world and gathers up everything that it contains, so as to bring it into the kingdom.

Is it comforting to you to know that all will be included in the catch?

FISH: The fish represent all creation.

What kind of fish are you?

GOOD / BAD: Because of the religious laws about what is acceptable to eat and what was not, some fish were seen to be good, others bad for observant Jews.

Do you have beliefs that make something good or bad for you that a non-believer would be indifferent to? If so, can you give an example of a good or bad thing?

WICKED / RIGHTEOUS: The kind of relationship determined whether someone was wicked or righteous.

Have you ever called something wicked that another called righteous? Has anyone called something you did wicked that you thought was righteous? Are you a combination of both?

SEPARATE: To separate is to divide things into categories.

What in you needs to be separated out in order to enter the kingdom of heaven?

UNDERSTOOD: To understand something is to have stood under it.

Which of these parables (if any) have you stood under? How does that help you to understand it?

STOREROOM: A storeroom serves as a place to keep things we think we will need in the future.

If you were to take an inventory of what you have placed in your storeroom, what would it contain? Why did you put each item in there? When was the last time you went to your 'storeroom' to bring out something to use? What was the last thing you put there?

TEACHER / INSTRUCTED: Jesus used everyday examples to help us know what to put in our storerooms of faith.

If you were teaching children about this collection of parables, what examples (fields/pearls/storeroom) would you use to help them connect with the truths they contain?

NEW / OLD: Our faith ‘storerooms’ have valuables from the time of Abraham as fresh as this moment.
*If you were to give examples of what you have stored from the time of Abraham, what would they be?
What are the freshest additions to your collection?*

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 13: 44 // Mt. 19:21; Prov. 2:4, 3:15; 4:7; Sir. 20:30; 2 Bar. 6: 7-9; **Mt. 13:49** // Lev. 11:10-12;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: I Kgs. 3:5, 7-12; [Ps. 119: 57, 76-7, 127-30](#); Rom. 8:28-30; Mt. 13: 44-52;
Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 29: 15-28; [Ps. 105: 1-11, 45](#); Rom. 8:26-39; Mt. 13: 31-3, 44-52;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Everything points to the response, rather than the search. This is what we find elsewhere in Matthew. He emphasizes the response. Pg. 148. The servant Church of the Second Moment. That is, the second moment of Matthew’s gospel, the moment of response. This is the treasure that is worth selling everything. Pg. 151 Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014.

There is a difference between gifts and investments. And life in the Kingdom is according to the Gift. Fr. Robert Beck

The greatest thing is to be found at one's post as a child of God, living each day as though it were our last, but planning as though our world might last a hundred years. –C. S. Lewis

Our values are what define the choices we make, the actions we take, the life that we create. They are a set of subtle and not so subtle beliefs, ideas, and ways of seeing the world that we deeply subscribe to but may not even be conscious of. And if we're not conscious of the values of the conditioned self, they are going to inhibit our capacity to be truly awake. So it's imperative, if you want to be an agent of conscious evolution, to bring the light of awareness to this level of yourself. What are your deeply held values? Are they your values? Did you freely choose them? Probably not. Very few people freely choose their own values. Many of us who have grown up in a postmodern world where the freedom of individual is valued above all else assume that we have freely chosen our values, but it's very rarely true. So this is why the culturally conditioned self is a subject in all of us that needs to be made an object in the light of our own awareness, so that we will be in a position to begin to freely choose who we will be. We have to, in a sense, die and be reborn again. This is what rigorous and serious spiritual practice is all about: learning how to freely choose to be yourself. Andrew Cohen

The process of religious conversion involves the same dynamics as economic conversion (or any other kind of conversion). In Matthew, the process of conversion to the reign of God is outlined in parables. Pg. 194 These parables tell stories about different kinds of conversions and different steps in the conversion process...Matthew’s Jesus uses the same terms to describe the process for religious conversion of the disciples that advertisers implement in seeking economic conversion of consumers. ...Conversion implies a change of loyalty, a change from the reign of one god to another. It involves “selling” in order to “buy”. But one will never sell unless what is bought is perceived as better. Pg. 195. Faith is faith only when it gives courageous expression to its convictions. Pg. 190. Crosby, Michael H. *The Dysfunctional Church*. Notre Dame, IN. Ave Maria Press. 1991.

[Gospel of Thomas](#), Logion 109: Jesus said, "The kingdom is like a man who had a treasure hidden in his field, and did not know it. And when he died he left it to his son, who also knew nothing about it, and accepted the field, and sold it. And the buyer went, and while he was plowing he found the treasure. And he began to lend at interest to whomever he wished."

It is said that the great Saint Anthony used to tell his disciples: “When you die and stand before the Judgment seat of God, you will not be asked whether you had become another Anthony, or Paul, or even the great Mary herself, but whether you had become truly yourself.” (Based on Life of Saint Anthony by St. Athanasius)

Finding the treasure disrupts normal daily life and promises a different way of life. The treasure is so valuable that it is worth doing new, joyful, risky, and costly things to possess it. ...it requires setting aside all other priorities in wholehearted commitment. Carter, Warren. *Matthew and the Margins*. Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2000. Page 295.

The great Rabbi Zusha was teaching his students on day about the meaning of one’s life. He replied;
“When I meet the Ancient of Days, I will not be asked, ‘Were you Moses’, but I will be asked; ‘Were you Zusha’?”

It was important to buy fish from Jewish fishermen because that was the only way you could count on the salted/ sliced fish being Kosher (good/ acceptable fish). In fact a warning in the *Makshirin 6:3* states: “All fish (sold by gentiles) can be presumed unclean...All manner of brine can be presumed to be unclean.”

Murphy-Oconnor, Jerome. [Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men](#). Bible Review, June 1999. Pages 22f.

We can understand such things as wealth, power, and leisure; we can realize that they do transform the life of the one who acquires them; but we can’t quite comprehend how the same thing happens to us when we accept the message of Jesus. Greeley, Andrew. *When Life Hurts*. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988. Page 31. **SEARCHING FOR TREASURE**

In other words, desire is the living impulse that, together with truth and action, constitutes the deepest orientation and drive of a human being toward something more complete, final and absolute. 219

Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. *The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies.* Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

The gospel remains the most authentic affirmation of the mystery of the Church in which Jesus does not attempt to define or even explain, but says “the kingdom of heaven is like” and proceeds with parables to draw people into the experience of the kingdom of heaven. In the end, Jesus simply says that the community of believers in him, the people of the Gospel way of life, who are willing to risk taking him who is the Word at this word are his Church.. Parr, Raymond. *Process Person Presence_* Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990. Page 150.

The crowd gasps when Jesus unfurls a scroll and begins to preach in the synagogue of Nazareth. Their astonishment is apparent on the faces in this illumination from the Codex Aureus of Echternach, made for the Holy Roman Emperor Henry III in about 1055.

Bible Review. April 2000. Page 22.

Jesus’ disciples today need to examine their relationship with what is new, fresh and unorthodox. Jesus spoke of balancing traditional wisdom with the untried: “Every scribe who is instructed in the secret of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of storeroom both new and old “Mt. 13:52. In the light of this brief saying we need to ask if those who fear and reject everything new in daily life, dress, worship and prayer can really be said to know the secret of the kingdom of heaven.

Hays, Edward. *The Gospel of Gabriel_* Easton, KS. Forest of Peace Books. 1996. Page_362.

Hope is not the same thing as optimism. Optimism merely reflects the desire that external circumstances may one day improve. There is nothing wrong with optimism, but we may not always have reasons for it. The theological virtue of hope is much more than optimism. Hope is based on the conviction that God is at work in our lives and in the world. Hope is ultimately a gift from God given to sustain us during difficult time. Charles Peguy described hope as the “little sister” that walks between the “taller sisters” of faith and charity; when the taller sisters grow tired, the little one instills new life and energy into the other two. Hope never allows our faith to grow weak or our love to falter. Gustavo Gutierrez (*Remembering the Poor*) America 2/3/03 Pg. 16.

What we are all searching for is Someone to surrender to, something we can prefer to life itself. Well here is the wonderful surprise: God is the only one we can surrender to without losing ourselves. The irony is that we actually and finally find ourselves, but now in a whole new and much larger field of meaning. Richard Rohr

In the second half of the spiritual life, you are not making choices as much as you are being guided, taught, and led—which leads to “choiceless choices”: these are the things you cannot not do because of what you have become; things you do not need to do because they are just not yours to do; and things you absolutely must do because they are your destiny and your deepest desire. Your driving motives are no longer money, success, or the approval of others. You have found your sacred dance. Now your only specialness is in being absolutely ordinary and even “choiceless,” beyond the strong opinions, needs, preferences, and demands of your first half of life. You do not need your “visions” anymore; you are happily participating in God’s vision for you. . . . Our dreams of our early years have morphed into Someone Else’s dream for us. Richard Rohr

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2014. Pgs. 148-151. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2008. Pgs. 121-124. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle A* 2001. Pgs. 116-119. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Wiederkehr, Macrina, OSB. *Seasons of Your Heart_* Silver Burdett Co, Morristown, NJ. 1979. **TREASURE.** Page 60-61.

Janice Grana Ed. *Images.* St. Mary’s College Press, Winona MN 1976. **NOT FOR THE HESITANT:** Page 130 **INNER STRENGTH:** Pg. 48.

Aurelio, John R. *Fables for God’s People_* NY. Crossroad. 1988. **THE BOX.** Page 28ff.