**July 28th 2024 Ninth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Matthew 13:44-52** 0730

**Theme: Hidden Wisdom.**

May the grace of our Lord given in His Word ever be to us a treasure that we value higher than any other. Amen. Dear friends in Christ: If someone were to invent a story, one which would be printed and sold in a book, or one which would be written for the big screen, no doubt there would be conflict, there would be a villain and a hero, there would be a climactic rise filled with drama and cliffhangers. Maybe the hero saves the day, or he fails, and the villain gets the upper hand. One thing is for certain, however, and that is that the book or film will be promoted, praised, and pushed upon the public incessantly for months and even years. The critics will give their review, generally only good things to say, and the book or film will make millions of dollars in very short order. Yet not one author, not one director or producer would ever write with the intention of leaving the publicity of the film in the hands of those who are unqualified. They would never allow that their work go without promotion of any kind, and they would never write a story that presents the heroes in a light which casts doubt on their heroism. Yet there is one such work in the world today, which despite all logic has stood the test of time, and presents to the public the truth of all so-called heroes of mankind. The Bible is a mystery to sinful man. It is a collection of works, written by many different men, from all classes of society, each one presented in a not so favorable light. For example the apostle Paul, who wrote thirteen, and possibly fourteen, of the books of the Bible, is shown to be a murderer; the apostle Peter is presented as a coward who has a big mouth; King David is both a murderer and an adulterer; and Abraham is shown to be a polygamist. These are the earthly ‘heroes’ of the Bible. Further no promotional firm was used to promote the book; rather, over the centuries it has been banned, burned, railed against with many notable men doing their best to demote it.

Further, God does not employ the rich and powerful to spread His book around the world, but it is placed into the hands of the lowly, the meek, the poor of the world. In truth everything about God’s book is quite curious to man, and is really the very opposite of what we would do with any works of our own. And yet, in spite of these things, the Bible has stood the test of time, surviving thousands of years and incessant attacks. From an earthly perspective there is nothing to suggest that the Bible would be a book which would be spread all over the world, or that it would even survive very long. Yet this is the glory of God, and His power in His rule over His kingdom of power. This is the reason Paul says: *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:26-31)* It is this very mystery that we will look at today, and find in the end the glory and grace of God in Christ Jesus our Savior. Today we will see hidden wisdom found in earthen vessels, and it is an inestimable treasure. We will do so according to our text for today which is found in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at verse forty four.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most glorious Lord, we praise and bless Thy name for the inspiration of Thy Word, that we may rely on it, trust in it, and receive eternal salvation from it. We thank Thee also for the preservation of Thy Word unto us, despite the efforts of our enemies to rid it out of the world. We pray that Thou wouldst continue to preserve it among us, in our midst all our days. Never allow us to put it away from ourselves through the lust of the flesh, but be willing to prat with all things for the sake of the saving knowledge of Thy redeeming work. Help us to see the importance of this knowledge, and to sell all that we have to receive and retain this saving knowledge. Be Thou gracious unto us, and by Thy Word grant that we be not among those cast away in the Day of Judgment, but among those that are put into vessels, the heavenly vessels of salvation. Uphold us by Thy grace, give us courage to be willing to put away our dreams, to put away our wealth, yea all things for Thy sake and to dwell with Thee eternally in paradise. By Thy Spirit enable us to sacrifice all these things in favor of a better country, a better home. O Lord, grant these things, not for our sake’s, but for the sake of the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn of the hidden wisdom of God:

1. **Found in earthen vessels.** We read verses forty four through forty six: **read verses here.** The apostle Paul said: *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (2 Cor. 4:6-7)* What we discussed in the introduction concerning the despicable actions of many of the Biblical figures, is now seen in a new light. This is displayed to us for a few reasons: first, to show unto all who would read the Bible, would learn that hope is not to be found in those earthly men, for they have nothing to offer us in our own struggle with sin; secondly, it is to show the truth about Christianity that has been marred in recent times. Many people view Christianity as a group of people who believe themselves to be perfect, and who are nothing but hypocrites, preaching perfection while sinning themselves. This, of course is not true, for Christians are not sinless people, but sinners who have been forgiven. Finally when the treasure of the Gospel is given through these weak men, then the glory for all good which comes from it is given to God and not to those weak, sinful men. It is to God’s glory alone that we have His Wisdom and not only that, but we have it in a form which can be received by mere men, in the form of a book. Truly by God’s power His wisdom, that is, the wisdom of salvation through Christ, could have been given to men is=n some high and exalted form, like the sending of angels to preach, or God’s hand inscribing it on the wall like in the book of Daniel. However, God knows that we cannot apprehend such high and exalted forms, and so we would still be lost. Thus, God condescended to prepare a book for us, written over the course of many centuries, all teaching the same thing, united in their doctrine, all teaching of Christ crucified for the sins of the world.

Jesus, in our text, teaches of the simplistic nature of the kingdom of heaven, meaning salvation and eternity. He first compares it to a treasure a man finds in field, and desiring more than anything that treasure goes and sells everything he has to buy the field where the treasure is so it may be his, and he is filled with joy. Next a similar story is told about a merchant man searching for goodly pearls, and when he finds that one rare pearl of great price, he goes and sells all of his earthly possessions so that that pearl might be his. Now we want to note first that Jesus is not saying that possession of the Gospel is received by some sacrifice of our own, but rather, that when the treasure or the pearl are found, a man who understands what he has found, will be willing to part with anything and everything to possess and keep what he has found. Now the pearl of great price parable has also been marred in our modern day, used by the Mormans to describe the Book of Morman. Yet, Jesus uses this this description of truth, not lies. He uses it to describe the hidden wisdom of God found in earthen vessels. First by a book, the Bible; but further put into the hands of mortal, sinful, and weak men. Faithful pastors are never what one would imagine. They are servants of Christ and of their congregations, and one would assume that God would choose those men who are charismatic, well spoken, or at least amiable. Yet, what we find is that these men are not what we think should be used to promote such a pearl of great price. They are in fact very often the opposite of those things. These men are tasked with the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. Think of two examples from the Bible itself. When God called Moses to be the prophet of Israel, Moses declared that he did not speak well, and wanted nothing more than for God to send someone else. He did not seek to be a leader or a shepherd of God’s people, but God chose him. Think also of the prophet Jeremiah who declared that he was like a little child and that someone else should be God’s prophet instead. These then are the vessels God uses to give unto us His hidden wisdom, hidden by unbelief, but revealed by the Spirit through faith as we saw last Sunday. Thus is the hidden wisdom of God found in earthen vessels, which is:

1. **An inestimable treasure.** We read verses forty seven through fifty two of our text: **read verses here.** Jesus now turns his attention to the difference between those who have received and kept the treasure and the pearl, and those who chose to deny it. Those who have it will be put into vessels, and those who do not will cast away. That is a scene of Judgment Day, when the angels will gather the justified of God into eternal life, and cast the self-righteous into everlasting damnation. This teaches just why a person should be willing to part with everything, or sell it as Jesus says, to have retain the pure teaching of God’s Gospel through Christ. Because it is literally a matter of life or death. To possess it gives you eternal life. To reject it in favor of earthly things is eternal death. Then Jesus asks those who heard Him if they understood, to which they replied that they had. He then ties all of this together by teaching of the ministry both of the head of the household and of the ministers of the church. Every scribe refers to those who have the charge of souls, who is instructed in the kingdom of heaven will bring from that treasure which has been discovered and kept things new and old. This means that each man who has this charge is to continue to preach Christ crucified and to continue to discover for himself and for those souls in his care evidence and teaching of this central truth. In other words to declare the greatness and value of the treasure that has been found. The pearl of great price can be shared, it can be given to others without it taking any value away from us.

Further it is more valuable than anything else that can be possessed in this world, and it even yet more valuable because of its eternal nature as opposed to the temporal nature of anything else that we can possess. This Jesus speaks to also: *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21)* Let us then recognize the value of what we have received, and let us hold onto it jealously. Let us guard it against corruption and those that would twist it by false doctrine. Let us teach it to our children, and spread it abroad. May the Lord continue to keep the truth of the Gospel in our midst that we may be spiritually rich and glorify our Lord in heaven. Amen.