

July 26, 2026 — Sermon

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:26–39

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:44–50

“The Greatest Treasure”

Jesus often taught about the kingdom of heaven through ordinary things. He spoke about seeds in a field, yeast mixed into dough, fishermen casting their nets, merchants searching for pearls, and farmers working the soil. Jesus paid careful attention to everyday life. By focusing on the ordinary moments, Jesus found the value of the kingdom of God. This teaches us something important. We often expect God’s kingdom to appear only in dramatic miracles or extraordinary spiritual experiences. But Jesus teaches us to look at our everyday lives more carefully. The kingdom of God may be hidden in the ordinary places of our lives—in our work, our families, our relationships, our struggles, and even in the decisions we make every day.

Today, Jesus says: “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” This image would have been familiar to the people listening to Jesus. Israel had experienced many wars, invasions, and periods of political instability. And they didn’t even have Dairy State Bank or Northwestern Mutual to fall back on. When danger came, people sometimes buried their valuables in the ground to protect them. If they were forced to flee or were unable to return, those valuables might remain hidden for many years. One day, a man unexpectedly discovers such a treasure. When we hear this story, we might ask, “Shouldn’t he have returned the treasure to its original owner?” But Jesus is not teaching a lesson about ethics or property law. He is teaching us about value. The man recognized the value of what he had found. In Korea, there is a children’s gospel song about this story, and the line says the man even sold his house, land, and refrigerator. Anyway, he sold everything he had. But notice these words: “in his joy.” He did not sell everything while complaining about what he had to give up. He did not focus on his sacrifice. He acted with joy because what he was gaining was far greater than what he was giving up. The center of this parable is not sacrifice. It is discovery. His sacrifice makes sense only because he first discovered the value of the treasure.

We understand this in our own lives. Students spend years studying because they see the value of education. Parents give their time and energy because they treasure their children. Farmers invest their labor because they believe in the

harvest. When we know the value of something, we are willing to reorder our lives around it. When I decided to come to the United States for further theological study, it was a significant challenge. I left behind familiar people, places, and routines. There were moments of uncertainty, and sometimes I wondered whether I had made the right decision. But I continued because I believed there was something valuable to learn. I wanted to broaden my perspective and to interact with a wide variety of people. Those values have led me to this place. When we clearly see the value of something, we become willing to pay the cost. This is what happened to the man in the field. Once he found the treasure, he was no longer divided about what mattered most. His direction became clear. He had found one thing worth holding on to.

This is what Matthew shows us today: Matthew shows us the direction of a life lived in the kingdom of God. A person who has discovered the kingdom does not have to spend their life moving from one temporary promise to another. The person who discovers the kingdom has found a clear center. A tree grows strong because its life is anchored in one root system. A heart grows strong because it is anchored in one Lord. Let me give you a short lesson from East Asian culture. Just as some Americans study Latin as a classical language, Koreans have traditionally studied classical Chinese characters. Some of you may have seen these characters before. The first character, 中, means "center," and the second character, 心, means "heart" or "mind." When they are combined in the character 忠, the word means "faithfulness" or "loyalty." There is an old interpretation that says, "When the heart rests in one center, it becomes faithful." When the heart has one clear center, we know where to stand and what to hold on to. Another character, 患, means "trouble" or "worry." In an old symbolic interpretation, it was described as a heart trying to hold more than one center. When the heart has more than one center, anxiety grows. The man in Jesus' parable had found his center. Once he discovered the treasure, every other decision followed from that discovery.

However, this raises another question. If we choose the kingdom of God, does that mean our lives will become easy? Will we no longer experience pain, illness, loss, uncertainty, or disappointment? Paul gives us a clear answer in Romans 8. No. Living in the kingdom of God does not mean living without suffering. Paul speaks honestly about weakness. Sometimes our suffering is so deep that we do not even know how to pray. Yet Paul says that the Holy Spirit meets us precisely in our weakness and intercedes for us. Paul also speaks of hardship, distress, persecution, famine, danger, and the sword. These are not small inconveniences. They are experiences that can shake a person's whole life. But Paul says: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Notice that Paul does not say, "After all these things are over, we will become conquerors." He says: "In all these things." In hardship. In uncertainty. In grief. In weakness. It is in the middle

of these things that we are more than conquerors through Christ. This is what Romans shows us today. Romans shows us the power of a life lived in the kingdom of God. While Matthew shows the direction, Romans shows the power.

The kingdom of God does not mean the absence of suffering. It means receiving the power and courage to face suffering without losing our center. God's kingdom does not promise that nothing painful will happen to us. It promises that nothing painful will have the final authority over us. The kingdom does not always remove the storm. But it gives us something certain to hold on to in the storm. Why can Paul speak with such confidence? Not because he believes Christians are strong enough by themselves. He says that we are more than conquerors "through him who loved us." Our strength comes from the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. That is why Paul concludes that neither death nor life, neither the present nor the future, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is why the kingdom is worth everything.

The greatest treasure makes us willing to let go of everything else. To recognize what is most valuable in life is wisdom, and to let go of whatever keeps us from holding on to what is most valuable in life is courage. I hope everyone in this room will be wise and courageous. Being wise and courageous is not always easy. So we follow Jesus Christ because he is the source of our wisdom and courage. Through him, we are more than conquerors. So let us hold firmly to the greatest treasure. Let us place Christ at the center of our lives. And when hardship comes, let us remember that through the One who loves us, we are more than conquerors. This is our direction. This is our strength. This is our hope. Amen.

Let us pray. Gracious God, thank you for speaking to us through your Word. Through your Word, help us know where we should go and what we should hold on to. Fill us with the joy of discovering the one true treasure, and give us the strength not to despair amid the hardships of this world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.