

The Treasure in the Field



Extravagant Love (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

The title for my talks this week is: Extravagant Love. It'll bring you into a new dimension in God, both in appreciating God and in responding to Him. Extravagant Love. Does that word "extravagant" surprise you? It may do, but I believe it's appropriate, because I'm speaking, first and foremost, of the love of God.

The very nature of God is love. He's so much bigger and greater than we can imagine. And this is true of His love. Our human love is often so petty and so stingy and so self-centered. But God's love is vast, it's boundless, it's extravagant!

Listen to a prayer that Paul prayed for God's people in Ephesians 3:14-19:

> "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. [Notice, we cannot make room for Christ to dwell in our hearts until we're strengthened with power by the Spirit. And then Paul goes on,] And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

You see the central theme of Paul's prayer there for us as God's people is that we may know God's love. That we may be established in His love, that we may be able to grasp its dimensions; how wide, how long, how high, how deep. And then he concludes by saying, "To know this love that

surpasses knowledge…" That's a paradox, isn't it? How can we know love that passes knowledge? Well, I believe there's an answer. I believe that we don't know it with our intellect, but we know it through the revelation of Scripture and of the Holy Spirit. And it's a revelation that comes to our spirit, rather than to our minds.

And that's the purpose of my talks this week to share with you various passages of Scripture that provide us with standards by which to measure God's love. The first such passage that I'm going to look at today is a parable of Jesus that's found in Matthew 13:44. It's the parable of the treasure hidden in the field. But before I read it let me just say a brief word about the purpose of a parable. A parable is a simple story about familiar, material, earthly things. Things that were familiar to all the hearers of Jesus. But its purpose is to reveal unseen, eternal and spiritual things, so that the familiar scene and the familiar story becomes a mirror that reflects unseen, unfamiliar spiritual things. And so Jesus proceeds in the method of a good teacher, which is from the known to the unknown. He starts with what His hearers were familiar with to lead them on to that with which they were not familiar. And so when we read a parable, we need to ask ourselves: what are the spiritual things that correspond to the material things in the parable. Now I'm going to read the parable and then I'm going to give you my interpretation of it. This is the parable, it's very simple, it's contained in one verse:

> "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."

Now that's very simple. Let's ask ourselves what are the spiritual realities that this simple story reveals to us. I'm giving you my interpretation. I'm not suggesting that there is no other interpretation, but I believe that my interpretation is in line with the principles of scripture. The man who found the treasure is Jesus. The field is the world. That's stated in Matthew 13:38 in another parable and it's a principle that runs all through the seven parables that are found in Matthew 13. The field is the world. Now what about the treasure? I believe the treasure is God's people in this world. Let me just give you those three correspondences again: the man is Jesus, the field is the world, the treasure is God's people in this world.

Now when the man discovered that there was a treasure in that field, he did something very wise. He didn't immediately tell everybody about the treasure. In fact, it says he hid it, because he knew that if people discovered that there was a treasure in the field, there'd be a lot of competition. So he hid it and he decided to buy the whole field. Now bear in mind that he really didn't want the field. All he wanted was the treasure in the field, but he was realistic enough to know that in order to get the treasure, he had to pay the price for the field. And the price for that man was very high. It cost him all he had, but he did it with joy because he knew the value in what he was getting in the treasure.

Then I can picture the surprise of the local residents. "Whatever did that man want that field for? It's not really good for anything. It doesn't have any real estate value. It's no good for crops. All it produces is thorns and thistles. Why did he pay a sum like that for a field like that?" You see they didn't know about the treasure. The only person who knew about the treasure was Jesus. And so He paid the price for the whole world in order to obtain for Himself the treasure that's in the field and the treasure is God's people.

Continuing with this parable of the treasure in the field, I've said that Jesus paid the full price for the field, but the treasure was what He wanted. Let's look at another very familiar verse of the New Testament, John 3:16:

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, [that's Jesus] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

So God loved the world and He gave the life of His Son to redeem the world. But what God receives out of the world is the "whoever", whoever believes in Him shall not perish. That total company of "whoever's" is the treasure in the field that Jesus died to purchase. He redeemed the world for the sake of the "whoever."

And then in Titus 2:14, we find the same truth presented again. It's speaking there about Jesus Christ and it says:

> "He gave himself [that was His price, Himself, all He had] for us to redeem us [that means to buy us back] from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

That's the treasure, a people that are His very own. A people who have been redeemed from the world, redeemed from wickedness, purified, and made zealous to do what is good. And the price was Himself, all He had, all He was. He laid down His life, He gave Himself to buy that field for the sake of the treasure, His redeemed people.

Now, let me bring to you one further thought about this treasure in the field. Jesus has bought the field, but He leaves it to His servants, the ministers of the Gospel to recover the treasure. And there's a lot of work involved in that. You've got to find where the treasure is. You've got to

dig it up, you've got to take it out of the earth, and it's lain there a long time; it's rusty, it's dirty, it's mildewed, it's corroded, it needs a lot of cleaning up.

Now Jesus is not doing the cleaning up Himself. He's got His servants in this world to find His treasure, dig it out with hard labor and believe me, bringing people to the Lord and preaching the Gospel to them is real hard work. It's just as hard work as digging a treasure out of a field. But this is left to the ministers of the Gospel. I'm one of many whom God has in this world. The purpose of this radio broadcast of mine is really to get that treasure out of the field, to clean it up and make it fit for the Lord.

This is what Paul says about his own ministry in Colossians 1:28-29:

> "We proclaim him [that's Jesus. That's what I do. The whole purpose of this broadcast of mine is to proclaim one person, Jesus.] We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ."

You see, Paul was not content that any of God's people should be below the level of their potential. And so he worked hard and he went on to say:

> "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

Look at all the words that denote activity there. "I labor, struggling, his energy powerful works in me." What's the whole purpose and direction of all that activity? To get that treasure out of the field. To get it cleaned up, to make it fit to present to the Lord who died and bought the field with His own life. How do we do that? Paul says, "We admonish, we teach, our aim is to present everybody just as good as he or she can be in Christ." But as we close this message for today, I want to remind you of the price that was paid for the field and for the treasure that's in the field. The price was all He had. He held nothing back. His love was extravagant. He did it with joy because He had such love for the treasure.

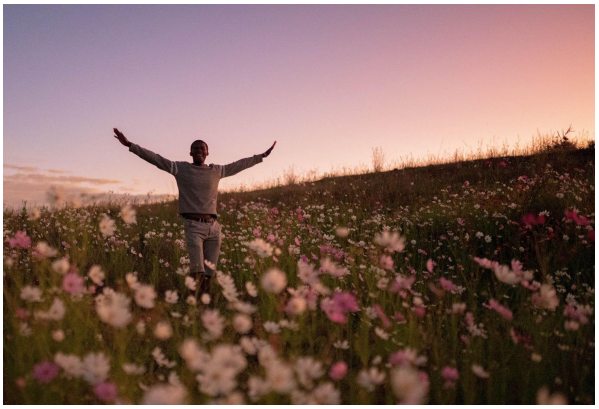
Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme: Extravagant Love. I'll be speaking about the pearl of great value.

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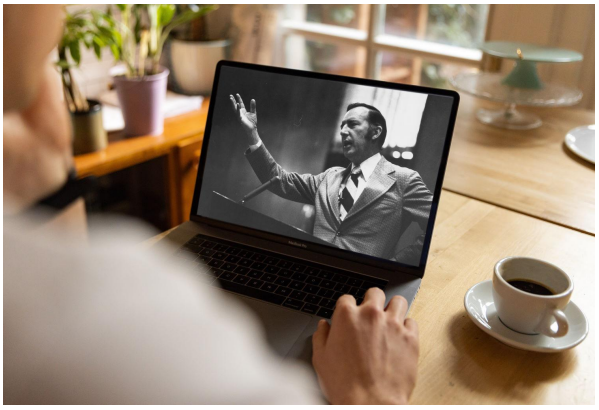
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