

Sunday, July 26, 2026
Proper 12A; 9th Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 13:44-52

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

My friends,

What is anything worth?

They say one man's garbage
is another man's treasure.

Take,
for instance,
this treasure. [hold up agate]

This agate
from the Nechako River
is the biggest I've ever found.
To most people,
it might just look like an ordinary stone,
but when I found it,
I was walking along with my kids.
Spotting it in the sun,
underneath a perching eagle,
gave me a sense of awe and joy.

It's a memory
of being with my children,
hunting for treasure.
It's a reminder of small moments of wonder
and the value we sometimes overlook
in the things
that don't seem important to others.
That's why it's a treasure to me.

The market value
of this agate is probably \$5-15 CAD.
But it's worth more than that to me.

Or, how about the banana taped to a wall in 2019?

It's an art piece
by Italian conceptual artist Maurizio Cattelan
titled *Comedian*.

It famously sold for \$6.2 million.

\$6.2 million for a banana.

And it's not even the original banana.

To some,

it's a clever statement
on the commercialization of art.

For others,

it's an unsightly waste
of a banana.

For somebody,
it was worth \$6.2 million.

Things are only worth
what someone
is willing to pay.

In today's parables,
a man was willing
to buy a field
with all that he has.
Another sells all that he can
to buy a pearl
of great value.
For them,
these things were worth everything.

Usually,
people assume
these parables
are about us finding Christ.
But that raises a big problem.
Who can purchase Christ and His kingdom?
Who can afford Him?
Christ is truly a treasure beyond price.

The Kingdom of Heaven
is like a treasure
that is so valuable
that everything is given
to possess it.

But here's the surprise.
You are not the buyer.
Christ is.
YOU are the treasure
that JESUS came to redeem.

I. We Cannot Buy the Treasure
A. Everyone Has a Treasure

My friends,
Everyone has a treasure.
And Jesus said,
*"Where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:21).
Where is your heart?
Is it wrapped up in heaven,
or bogged down here
in earthly treasures?

Our hearts are often tied tight to things here.

Money.
Possessions.
Reputation.
Comfort.
Politics.
Success.
Health.
Wellness.
Entertainment.
Sports.
Travel.
Achievements

The problem with these things
is that they do not stay.
They don't abide.
They perish.

Early Friday morning,
someone broke into my office.
They took my favourite teapot.
I kid you not.
They took a teapot.
But it was **my** teapot,
and **I** liked it.
It's a bit of a bummer.
I liked that teapot.

But it was a good reminder
to hold material things
with a **very** light hand.
Jesus says,
*"Do not lay up for yourselves
treasures on earth,
where moth and rust destroy
and where **thieves** break in and steal,
but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust destroys
and where thieves
do not break in and steal.
For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:19–21)

But what then?
Do I then hope
that I muster up the ability
to give Jesus my heart properly?
Or rather,
do I trust that He has taken it?

B. The Price is Beyond Us

The gift of my heart certainly won't buy heaven.

*"The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked:*

who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

If I sold all **my** possessions,

could that buy heaven?

Could that

buy my soul a place in the kingdom?

"Will the Lord be pleased

with thousands of rams,

with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn

for my transgression,

the fruit of my body

for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7)

Jesus asked,

"What can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

And Scripture says,

"Truly no man

can...give to God the price of his life,

for the ransom of their life is costly

and can never suffice,

that he should live on forever

and never see the pit." (Psalm 49:7–9)

"What man can live

and not see death,

or save himself

from the power of the grave?" (Psalm 89:48)

C. We Cannot Buy the Kingdom

If this parable
were about me buying heaven,
then I have a problem.
I have nothing to offer.
Not enough faith.
Not enough obedience.
Not enough good intentions.
Not enough love.
Not enough repentance.
Not enough heart.
And far too much sin.

We sometimes imagine
that we come to Jesus
bearing a precious gift—our hearts.
But our hearts
are more like a rusty can
in the junk heap.
Christ does not love us
because our gift is great.
He rescues us from the junk heap
because His **mercy** is great.

So,
if I cannot buy the treasure,
or the pearl,
who can?

II. Christ Bought The Treasure
A. Christ Treasured His Church

My friends,
The man in the field is Christ.
The treasure is His Church.
The merchant is Christ.
The precious pearl
is His Bride.

Hidden in the field
of this world
was a treasure no one valued.
Sinful.
Broken.
Dead.
Unclean.

Yet in pure mercy and grace,
Jesus saw treasure.
Jesus saw
what we would be in Him.
Jesus knew
what He would make us.

Jesus saw you in kindness.
Mercy.
Delight.
Love.

B. Christ Sold Everything

And for you,
Jesus sold **everything**.

Jesus,
*“Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality
with God
something to be grasped,
but emptied Himself,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being born in human likeness.
And being found
in human form,
He humbled Himself
and became obedient to death
—even death on a cross!”* (Philippians 2:6–8)
*“For you know the grace
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though He was rich,
yet for your sake He became poor,
so that you
by His poverty
might become rich.”* (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Jesus,
the Eternal Lord,
emptied Himself.
He emptied Himself
in becoming man.
He exhausted Himself
in service.
And He poured out His life
on the cross.
To purchase you.
*“The Son of Man
came not to be served
but to serve,
and to give His life
as a **ransom** for many.”* (Matthew 20:28)

*“He poured out His life unto death,
and was numbered
with the transgressors.
For He bore the sin of many,
and made intercession
for the transgressors.”* (Isaiah 53:12)

The Good Shepherd lays down His life.
God is the purchaser.
God is the gift giver.
*“He who did not spare His own Son,
but gave Him up for us all—
how will He not also,
along with Him,
graciously give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32)

St. Peter says,
*“For you know
that it was not with perishable things
such as silver or gold
that you were **redeemed**
from the empty way of life
handed down
to you from your forefathers,
but with the precious blood of Christ,
a lamb without blemish or defect.”* (1 Peter 1:18–19)

The saints in heaven sing,
*“You are worthy
to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood
you **purchased** men
for God
from every tribe
and language
and people
and nation.”* (Revelation 5:9)

St. Paul says
 that God's Church
 was "***bought*** with *His own blood*." (Acts 20:28b)
 and "*You were **bought** at a price.*" (1 Corinthians 7:23a)

With Christ's broken body—
 With Christ's soul poured out—
 With His blood offered from the cross—
 You were bought.
 Redeemed.
 Purchased.
 Ransomed.
 Paid for.

The language of the parable.
 You are God's treasured possession.
 Bought with everything.
 Bought with the precious life
 and blood
 of His One and only Son.

C. Christ Makes The Treasure Beautiful

And Christ makes you beautiful.
 Ephesians chapter five says,
 "...*Christ loved the church
 and gave Himself up for her,
 that He might make her holy,
 having cleansed her
 by the washing of water with the word,
 so that He might present the church
 to Himself in splendor,
 —without spot
 or wrinkle
 or any such thing—
 that she might be holy
 and without blemish.*" (Ephesians 5:25–27)

Jesus purchased the Church.
 He cleansed her in Baptism.
 Washed her,
 adorned her in Word
 and the Holy Spirit,
 to present her glorious.
 Radiant.
 The treasure of God.

A pearl begins as irritating sand.
 But the oyster turns it into beauty.

Christ took sinners
 and made them into saints.
 His radiant bride.
 A pearl beyond price.
 Purchased,
*not with perishable things
 such as silver or gold...
 but with the precious blood of Christ,
 a lamb without blemish or defect.”*

Jesus has bought your heart.
 He has claimed it.
 He has taken it.
 By Word and Sacrament,
 Jesus is detangling it
 from the rubbish treasure of the world,
 and uniting it
 to His heart in love.
 The same Lord who purchased His treasure
 with His blood
 now comes
 through His Word and Sacraments
 to keep it His own—
 daily pulling us away
 from the false treasures
 of the world and strengthening
 us in faith toward Him.

What changes
 when you know
 whose treasure You are?
 When you know
 that Christ has already given everything
 to make you His own,
 you no longer
 have to spend your life
 trying to prove your worth.
 You are free
 to love your neighbour selflessly,
 not to earn God's favour,
 but because you already have it.
 The Christian life
 is no longer a desperate search
 for treasure.
 In Christ,
 the treasure has found you.

*** Christ Makes Us His Treasure Forever**

My friends,
 What is the true worth
 of an agate?
 A banana duct-taped
 to a wall?
 Things are worth
 what someone will pay.
 So,
 how much are YOU worth?
 Not according to the world.
 Not according to your failures.
 Not according to your merits.
 Not according to your conscience?
 How much are you worth,
 according to the cross?
 What did God pay for you?

In pure grace,
God considered you worth
the blood
of His only Son.
That is your value.
That is your treasure.
The infinite,
freely given grace
and mercy
of God.

And that is the value
of the people sitting around you.
If Christ was willing
to give His own life
for the person sitting next to you,
then that brother
or sister
can never be ordinary
in your eyes.
The same Lord
who treasured you
treasures them.
That changes how we forgive,
how we bear with one another,
and how we welcome those
whom the world overlooks.

Christ's blood
is the value
of the people you pass by
in the street.
Christ's purchase changes
how we see
those outside the Church.
We no longer see people
merely as problems,
opponents,
or strangers,
but as those whom Christ desires to redeem.

There will be days
when you don't feel like a treasure.
There are days
you won't feel
like others are a treasure.
Your conscience will remind you
of your sins.
The world will measure your value
by your success,
your appearance,
or your usefulness.
But your worth was never determined
by your feelings
or people's opinions.
You may be tempted
to value others this way.
Remember,
your worth was set
at the cross.
Everyone's worth was determined at the cross.
Christ did not buy you
because you were already precious.
You are precious
because He bought you.

So when your conscience tells you
that you are worthless,
remember what Christ was willing
to pay for you.

When you wonder
how to live as His disciple,
remember that you no longer have to earn His love
—you already have it.

When you look upon your neighbour,
remember that Christ also
shed His blood for them.

And when your faith grows weak,
do not look within yourself
for assurance.
Return to where Christ still comes
to His treasure:
in His Word,
in the waters of Holy Baptism,
in Holy Absolution,
and at His Holy Table.
There the One who bought you
continues to forgive you,
strengthen you,
and keep you as His own
until the day He presents
His treasured Bride
before the Father
in everlasting glory.

The question of this parable
was never whether or not
YOU valued Christ enough.
The Gospel of this parable is
that CHRIST valued you enough.
How precious you are
in the sight of the Lord!

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, amen.