

Matthew 28:16-20

Sermon Theme: Treasure the Gospel!

- As it is revealed in the WORD!
- As you reveal it to the WORLD!

What do you treasure in your life the most? If you really want to know the answer to that, don't think about what you might *want*, "Wow, would *THAT* be a treasure, if I only had that... car, or toy, or job, or guy or gal!" think instead about how you might feel when someone takes something *away* from you. Today we're going to talk about something I pray you hold so near and dear that if it was ever taken away from you, or if you were ever taken away from *it*- even for one second, your entire world would collapse around you- We let Jesus share the treasure with us today: **¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

So what do you treasure the most? If you actually thought about what I said in the introduction, do you remember a time when you were completely destroyed because something was taken from you? Maybe it was a favorite stuffed animal. Maybe it was a favorite shirt or pair of shoes that got ruined. But for most of us, I'm sure it was much much more than that- maybe it was your position at your job that you truly loved. Even more serious- maybe it was your mother or father, or your husband or wife. Maybe, maybe it was a child. There are far more serious treasures that are lost on a daily basis around the world. But none compare to what Jesus was talking about to his disciples today.

Jesus had gone through it all- to provide for the world the greatest treasure of all- eternal life. He had just completed the most difficult task ever- giving up the greatest and most valuable treasure that this world would ever see- his precious lifeblood on Calvary, and now he was returning to heaven to continue his rule as Savior of the world, as intercessor for all believers, and as the great "welcomer" to the Banquet of the Lamb before the throne of grace in heaven forever! But before he left them and ascended into heaven, the great Redeemer of mankind- the one who had all of the power and authority and dominion and reign, the greatest treasure that this world would ever see, would give to his followers of all time a great treasure for themselves- to have and to hold and to share and to keep. Jesus said- and actually, I'm going to help you out here, as I was helped out, by sharing with you the Greek of this text: **go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in (or into) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (ready for this one?) ²⁰ teaching them to keep safe as a treasure everything I have handed down to you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**

The boy held up the special skull-shaped compass in his hands. As he lifted it up to the horizon, he noticed how the rock formations on the beach matched the eyes on the compass. At last! He found the beginning point for the map that he had found in his dusty attic only a day before! Off he went on his journey- for treasure that would save his family and the house that they were about to lose! (Of course, this is a reference to the 80's classic movie- "Goonies!") Who doesn't want to follow a treasure map to its final X-marked spot! Perhaps Jesus knew our human fascination with treasure, huh? And where did his map lead? To the Gospel! And he laid it out so clearly!

There were no traps, no tricks, no riddles when Jesus came and preached and taught! There was nothing but Passion (remember from last week what that means? Passion= An ardent desire that leads someone to suffer greatly in order to fulfill it!) Don't believe me? Just think of the night he spent with a Pharisee named Nicodemus...we hear the passage said in monotone when children recite it; we see it plastered on signs at football stadiums, but have you ever tried to put yourself in the presence of Christ and Nicodemus on the night when he looked that religious leader right smack dab in the eyes and with love and Passion- knowing what was coming said, **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life!** Jesus didn't make it a mystery when he looked Nicodemus right in the eyes and said with all of the Passion of the Savior of the world- **I am going to die for you!** He knew what he was here for- and he knew that it was the only treasure we would ever need- the Gospel- the good news of great joy for all the people- God keeps his promises! The treasure is here- on a cross! The treasure is here- and the grave could not hold it long! The treasure is here- in the palm of your hand, and in the depth of your heart- that is the treasure of the Gospel! That is the treasure of faith! And that treasure is yours!! Now keep it safe!

Remember what I said at that beginning of this? If you want to know what treasure really is- watch how people react when you take it away!

How have you reacted when someone took the Gospel away from you?! That's our problem, isn't it?! We kick and scream and moan when we don't get enough to eat, when our pay gets cut in half, when our friends make fun of us behind our backs, when our computer internet service gets slow- or when our streaming movie service falters- but when was the last time you kicked and screamed when someone took you away from family devotion time? When was the last time you kicked and screamed when someone kept you from going to church on a Sunday because your had something at work come up, or something at home with family come up- like a Sunday birthday party or family outing? What did Jesus say? **Teach them to keep safe as a treasure everything I have handed down to you...Is that what you do with the Word?**

I bet half of you didn't even read one verse in your Bible this week. How is that keeping it safe as a treasure? I bet half of you don't think first, every week, and every day- "Man, when am I going to get a chance to read my Bible today- that is priority #1!" I bet half of you don't think every day- "How can I live to show that I'm treasuring the Gospel today?" Passion?! Yea, Jesus having it for me is great! But me having it for Jesus, come on! That's tough! Well, so was going to the cross. But that's what Christian leaders do- we put ourselves up there with Jesus every day! You ready for that? You ready to treasure Jesus like that? You ready to join him?! I'm sure you wonder about that all the time- I do!

But here's the deal- you are treasure to him. And no one can ever take that away! Better yet, as Jesus said in John 10 (27-28) **My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.** You see, as Jesus implores you, "keep this treasure, keep this Word, and keep this Gospel of your life as your treasure..." he reminds us that we are his! He reminds us that his Passion drove him to pay the price to purchase you. Interesting enough, the place that marked the X for Jesus' work was known as Golgotha, or the place of the skull. But what's most important to Him is this- You are his treasure. You are his prize. And you fellow redeemed, fellow forgiven, you have been restored to live in the glory of the Gospel- do you know what that means?

May God lead you, kicking and screaming, if that ever gets taken away from you! Treasure the Gospel- your freedom, your forgiveness, and your life! In Jesus' name! Amen.