

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Kingdom of Heaven: Advancing Together
January 1, 2017 - The Kingdom of Heaven is a 'Treasure'

Intro:

Happy New Year – Excited?
Merry Christmas and continued prayer on the land sale
New Year's Resolution – to speak even more often about the Kingdom of God

What comes to your mind when we speak of the Kingdom of God?



Revelation 11:15

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."



Dr Paul Brand, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* with Phil Yancey, pioneering doc in the field of Hansen's disease also called leprosy.



Chest in the tomb of King Tutankhamun 1 A pair of papyrus sandals. 2- 3 pairs of gilded sandals. 3- One gilded headrest. 4- Necklaces. 6- Embroidered ceremonial robes belonging to the king, one of them was studded with over 3000 golden rosettes.

There have been a handful of tremendous treasure that have been found.

- The Spillings and Cuerdale Treasures – Viking Treasures – literally buried treasure
- Caesarea Sunken Treasure - **Mediterranean harbor in Israel's Caesarea National Park Muslim dynasty that ruled in much of North Africa and the Middle East from 10th century**
- The Whydah Treasure, the only known found pirate treasure from the ship the Whydah, sank off Cape Cod in 1717 under the command of notorious pirate Black Sam Bellamy. It was carrying tens of thousands of gold coins earned from selling slaves in the Carribean.

But most consider the biggest and richest buried treasure discovery was in 1979 in Afghanistan known as the **Bactrian gold**. The hoard is a collection of about 20,600 ornaments, coins and other kinds of artifacts, made of gold, silver, ivory, etc., that were found in six burial mounds (five women and one man) with extremely rich jewelry, dated to around the 1st century BCE. The ornaments include necklaces set with semi-precious stones, belts, medallions and a crown.



Buried treasure is a fascinating idea and Jesus says it has everything to do with the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:44

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

The message of the Kingdom of God is the message of Christ and it is the message of the early church.

This is the message of the early church

Of course in those days thoughts of kingdoms was not so unusual. Until 1776 monarchies and army leaders were essentially the only forms of government. It was all about money and strength of army. (And things have changed??)

Zechariah 14:9

“And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.”

This teaching should feel familiar to you as we have had this conversation before . . .

We have had this conversation before . . .

The church in the following centuries has made Christianity into many things, much about ritual and ceremony, lots of do's and don'ts, about family values and social justice. And money of course. But the early church understood it was about a King and His kingdom first and foremost.

Romans 14:17

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

By way of review from maybe 25 sermons dedicated to the Kingdom of God over the last 12 years there are three things I want you to have in the forefront of your mind for the next 15 minutes and into next week . . .

Three things:

1. The kingdom of Heaven is the rule and reign of God
2. It is the saving reign of God and Christ
3. It is the saving reign of God and Christ that is both present and future.

I have said that the kingdom of God is not mainly realm or place but rule or reign.

I said this reign is specifically his saving or redeeming reign. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are the same. God reigns where Christ reigns. And Christ reigns where God reigns. The kingdom is being manifested in power when demons and unbelief and unrighteousness are being defeated and salvation, righteousness, peace, and joy are happening.

And we have explored that this reign is present in part now, (we see through glasses dimly) but will be consummated at the second coming of Christ. So the blessings we have now in Christ are great (forgiveness, imputed righteousness, acceptance with the Father, no condemnation, the fellowship of Jesus by his Spirit in our lives, progressive transformation into his likeness, gifts of the Spirit, usefulness in ministry, all things working together for our good, etc.), but the fullness of our inheritance awaits the coming of Christ—no more sinning, no more sickness, no more injury or calamity, no more depression or spiritual warfare, no more ethnic strife or racism, no more wars, no more death. All that will come with the final consummation of the kingdom.

And the point here is not that the kingdom is bought, but that if it costs you everything you have, it's worth it. Notice two things: The man sold everything he had, and he did it with joy. "*In his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*" The kingdom of God is so valuable that losing everything on earth, but getting the kingdom, is a happy trade-off. That's the main point. It's not hard to see why that is so valuable. If the omnipotent, all-wise God is ruling over all things for your joy, everything must be working for your good, no matter how painful. And in the end God will triumph over all evil and all pain. So this kingdom is a treasure.

Nothing is worth more on this planet than the Kingdom of God. It is the over-riding value of everything held important for every Spirit led Christian. Not power, not family, not career, not physical health, not beauty, not technology, not oil. Not world hunger or social justice, not literacy or equal opportunity, not gender equality, not racial harmony nor addiction services. Not economic balance or political integrity or mental health. Don't get me wrong. I feel strongly about any one of these issues!!! But solving world hunger without it being an extension of the Kingdom of God is a waste of time. Racial or gender equality without it being an extension of the Kingdom of God is a waste of time. Finding a cure for cancer or even Alzheimer's (which killed my mother) outside of the rule and reign of Christ is a waste of time. Finding reconciliation between marriages and children that does not fall under the authority of the Kingdom of God and His peace bringing authority is a waste of time.

Nothing is worth more on Earth

"If you have not chosen the Kingdom of God first, it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead." ~ *William Law*

"I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity." ~ *David Livingstone*

Remember it all starts and ends with the Alpha and Omega – Jesus Christ.

You cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven without Being made new in Christ

John 3:3-6

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Let's do a Pop Quiz from a year ago . . .

What comes under the authority of Christ . . . no things, some things, or all things?

Colossians 1:16

For in him **all things** were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things** have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before **all things**, and in him **all things** hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have **all his fullness dwell in him**, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Now as we have said before, some people do not recognize His authority – His rule and reign in their lives. In fact some who claim to be Christians, who have prayed a prayer of salvation, have not indeed yielded to the rule and reign of Christ. And in that case they are still in rebellion. They have said I want to be in control of my life and pay the consequences later. But we know that one day all things, all people, will bow before the Father and testify that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now, here is where I want to land with this sermon this week and into next week's sermon...if the treasure of the Kingdom of God are the redeemed in Christ, then the church is the treasure that was spoken of in Matthew 13. Let me say that again...

If the treasure is the redeemed in Christ, then the Church is the treasure of the Kingdom of God!

Christ is the treasure that we will all sell everything for, but the church is the treasure that Christ was willing to die for. Christ and the Church are treasuring the Kingdom of Heaven. We are treasuring the Kingdom together, you and I **and Christ**.

Treasuring the Kingdom of Heaven together

And in 2017 and beyond, I believe God is preparing a blessing upon us so that we can then be the treasure that the world is longing for. The reservoir of love, the fountain of hope, the salve of peace, the relief of forgiveness, the joy of grace, the surprise of purpose. All these are in the possession of the church and the world is longing for it. They just don't know yet that the rule and reign of Christ in their lives is the most important thing on Earth. Nothing is sweeter, nothing is grander, nothing is more delicious, nothing is more satisfying than a life lived in the hope and the power of the Kingdom of Heaven.

"The frontiers of the kingdom of God were never advanced by men and women of caution."

~ J. Oswald Sanders

We must be brave and in some ways we must be a people of a fearless faith, even reckless faith if we are to see the frontiers of the kingdom of God advanced before our very eyes. Are you ready in 2017 to see God move in the most amazing of ways? I am! Let's go together in 2017.

January 1, 2017 Pre-Message Responsive Prayer

Leader: To be blessed

All: You must bless others

Leader: To be forgiven

All: You have to forgive others

Leader: To not be judged

All: You must not judge others

Leader: The first will be last

All: And the last will be first

Leader: You must lose yourself

All: To find yourself

Leader: You must first give

All: Before you can receive

Leader: Peacemakers will be called children of God

All: There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ

Leader: The sick are ministered to

All: The prisoners are visited

Leader: The refugee is provided shelter

All: The poor are clothed

Come, Lord Jesus. By your spirit, guide us in letting go of pride and embracing your Majesty and Rule. Open our minds to your mind, that we may reflect your love more fully. For in your holy name, for the King born in a humble stable, we pray. Amen