

Matthew 13: 44; Thomas 109

When I get board at night and start flipping through the TV channels I often stop at the PBS, Antique Road Show. I get hooked on the hope that some piece of junk turns out to be worth a fortune. Don't you?

Do you remember when we held our own Antique Road Show and Dessert fundraiser for the Access Project?

When an Antique Road Show appraiser asks the guests whether they know the value of their antique, almost invariably they answer, "***I have no idea.***" We all love the thrill of a trifling possession of a sentimental piece suddenly being worth a fortune, or at least worth far more than we thought.

Found treasure is an unexpected boon. It takes place outside the normal everyday course of events. There is a kind of lawlessness associated with finding treasure because it exceeds everyday expectations, and it belonged to someone else before we found it, and might still. Just who should have the treasure is a big question hanging in the air. Finding buried treasure is never far from larceny, especially in **Jesus'** day. In the days before banks and safety deposit boxes, burying one's treasures was a common occurrence. In Jerusalem ancient caches of gold coins and other artefacts are still being unearthed today. So, with the propensity of people burying their treasures, the Law of Moses required that upon finding buried treasure, one must make the find public and available to be claimed. No ***finders' keepers, losers' weepers*** here.

In Matthew's gospel, **Jesus** tells a parable about **God's** New Day and employs the image of buried treasure. Now most ancient stories about finding treasure have the treasure appear at the end as a reward for good deeds or hard work. But **Jesus** reverses the order. The treasure is found right away, hidden in a field. There is no doubt that the treasure belongs to someone else, but the finder covers it up again and in sheer joy goes and buys the field. This is grand larceny pure and simple.

God's New Day is like a person who finds a treasure hidden in a field and joyfully steals it. What's going on here?

Well, Thomas recognizes some of the difficulties here and in his version changes the issue of ownership of the field. The original owners in the story probably absentee landlords and possibly Romans at that have no idea about the treasure buried there. After passing through two generations, the field is purchased and the new owner while working the field finds the treasure. So far, so good. The

treasure for all intents and purposes is his to do with as he pleases. But then the new owner begins lending money at interest to whomever he pleases. **What?!**

Lending money at interest is usury and condemned in the Law of Moses and even again in the Gospel of Thomas. Moneylending was considered a despicable unclean occupation. Modern day equivalents would be loan sharking or pimping. How can **God's** New Day be anything like this?

Well, *first* let's remember this is a story not a detailed account of an occurrence or a prescription "*go and do likewise*". It is a parable pointing beyond itself to a deeper insight.

Second, as we saw last week with the washing of cups and plates, **Jesus** doesn't agree with the holiness code of the Old Testament. In fact **Jesus** pretty well rejects it out of hand. The holiness code puts **God** in a box; limits **God's** circle of concern and restricts **God's** compassion to those who keep all the rules. The holiness code with all its divisions and restrictions; all its rules and regulations are manmade according to **Jesus**, not **God** inspires. So, **God's** New Day breaks out of that box.

God's New Day breaks all their rules.

But friends, let's be perfectly clear, **God's** New Day still breaks all our rules today.

This is not an isolated insight. Several other parables follow suit. Remember the story of the Prodigal son. Everyone breaks the rules: The younger son for requesting his inheritance now instead of after his father's death: The father for granting the inappropriate request: The younger son for squandering his inheritance in dissipation and orgies: The father for welcoming him back with a feast: The older brother for talking back to his father and refusing to enter in. Everyone breaks the rules and only a whole lot of love will fix it. That is what **God's** New Day is about.

Application for Today

Don't hold on too tightly to the rules, sharing **God's** love has a way of repairing and putting things right. Amen.

Matthew 13: 45, 46 Thomas 76

Let's start again with the Antique Road Show. Every so often a piece of jewellery shows up in front of the camera. On an episode recently there was an interesting brooch highlighted. It was given to a neighbour by an elderly lady for helping her move into a nursing home. She had to downsize and so he could pick out anything he fancied for helping her. Turns out it was a wonderful rare designer brooch

valued at over \$7,000. Not bad for a good deed and a day's work. I think the neighbour and his wife will keep it for sentimental reasons as most folks at the Antique Road Show do with their treasured treasures.

The ability to recognize and treasure a true treasure when we come across it is the action in this next parable about **God's** New Day.

God's New Day is like a high-end pearl trader who comes across a priceless specimen and knows exactly what to do.

Now two things here, *first*, this is not a business model we should follow and isn't intended to be. It is a metaphor. When our trained or professional faculties come across what is beyond price, we are wise to invest everything else in the service of it. Or when our searching heart comes across our heart's true desire, we will always regret it, if we don't go all in, in the pursuit of it. Same with **God's** New Day. Treasuring the true treasure brings us into **God's** New Day.

Second, pearls are deeply symbolic in spiritual matters. The pearl is a treasure or jewel found in the depths of the warm waters of the surrounding seas, symbolizing the divine element of light found in the dark depths of the human soul. This luminescent pearl worth more than its weight in gold is buried in soft flesh, surrounded by a hard shell, lying at the bottom of the sea. There is another treasure with illuminating properties here on earth likewise buried, which may be found within us.

The pearl also is a symbol of something precious, often a symbol for a special kind of wisdom. Remember **Jesus'** admonition: ***"Don't throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them underfoot."***

So **Jesus** tells us that **God's** New Day is a priceless illuminating discovery deep within, and we would do well to care for it and invest all of our life in it. To put it another way, treasure the treasure of **God's** New Day found deep within your heart. It is the luminescent light of **God's** love that repairs the broken rules.

Application for Today

So, what is the treasure or who is the treasure in your life that you haven't been treasuring of late?

When we remember to treasure the true treasure in our lives **God's** New Day isn't far away.

Amen.