

“I just had to have it.” How often have you heard these words? Sometimes you may have said them yourself. These words usually get said after you have purchased or worked to get something that either cost a lot or took a lot of effort to get. When I think about the times when I have said that or something similar, what came up was the skateboard I saved for when I was 11 saving my lunch money and doing extra chores for months or perhaps my first iPhone which was not my usual “free phone” that was included in my cell phone contract. I never wanted to spend money on a cell phone and here I was paying for not just the monthly fee, but the phone.

“I just had to have it” came to mind for two of the series of parables about the kingdom of God that we have in this morning’s gospel. Both have to do with someone acquiring something i.e. I just had to have it. These are the parables:

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

I can see that the ‘someone’ in the first parable and the merchant both saying “I just had to have it!” But we have to be careful here. This isn’t a purchase that is just expensive. They both sold all that they had to get the treasure and the pearl. These parables are describing wanting something on a whole different level.

When last have you sold all that you have to get something you just had to have? I couldn’t think of a time. What would you sell all that you have to get? I had to ponder this question for awhile. My answer – to save the life of a loved one. What would be your answer? Take a moment to think about it.

Now let’s go back to the kingdom of God because after all these parables are all describing the kingdom of God. Is the kingdom of God what I would sell everything to get? Is God’s vision of a world where love abounds, and faith grows, that spreads everywhere, where there is peace and justice for all something I would sell all for? I would say yes except that I know God’s kingdom is coming among us now and I am certainly not selling all that I have to bring it about. Thinking about me being the one selling all that I have for the kingdom leaves me feeling guilty. ‘Bad Christian’ I think and so I was grateful for the perspective of Bishop Doyle<sup>1</sup> that I shared in this week’s email. He offers the following an I am paraphrasing - what if the someone who found the treasure or the pearl and sells all that she has to get it is God. What if we are the treasure and the pearl of great price?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://hitchhikingthebible.blogspot.com/2014/07/proper-12aordinary-17apentecost-7-july.html>

That gave me a whole different feeling – no longer one of guilt but one of being loved so completely and treasured so much. John 3:16 came to mind- <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

And when I began to think of the kingdom of God being about God persistently and passionately seeking us humans and all of creation, instead of seeing this gospel all these different quirky short descriptors of the kingdom of heaven, they began to blend into a beautiful vision – maybe a tapestry – a tapestry of God’s great love and vision for us

The kingdom of God is love that creates a spark in our hearts, but even if the spark is small like a mustard seed, it can grow into the greatest of shrubs to provide shelter to the birds. This kingdom spreads throughout the world like yeast within dough – leavening it so that it will rise. This kingdom holds all – the good and the bad – and God will sort it all out when it is time. This kingdom is all about God pursuing us – his creation – giving all that he has to have us.

I think the question for us it will we turn to this kingdom? Will we join in? Will we accept the love that God has for us and surrender to kingdom’s ways instead of running away and behaving like the kingdom of God is not happening right here and right now. The ways of the kingdom of God are counterintuitive, but in them we find deep hope and life.

And I wonder, how will we change if we turn ourselves over to God’s kingdom. Will we be quicker to love and forgive the other pearls around us? Will we fight for justice? Will we proclaim the hope that God is at work in this world and will we be part of that work in any way that we can? Will we look for the signs of God’s kingdom wherever we go and tell others when we find it?

So you pearls of great price, you treasures buried in a field, know that God has given everything for you and wants you in his kingdom of love. Join in and see what wonders are in store and perhaps we will find that God’s kingdom is truly what we had to have – what we were longing for.