

Treasure, a Pearl and a Net

Learning

Introducing the Parables (some example content you can engage with to prep and/or as a group)

- **Read Matthew 13:44-52**
- **Context:** This whole series of parables in Matthew marks a big shift where the large crowds start to fall away and only those who truly want to follow Jesus remain.
- **Themes:** True disciples of Jesus, ultimately, recognize that *God's kingdom is so valuable that it is worth sacrificing whatever it takes to be part of it.*
- **Culture:** There is actual evidence in the ancient world that people commonly hid valuable things in the ground. It makes sense that in a world without banks obscurity was the safest option.
- **Interesting Word:** The word used for the net (v. 13:47) is *sagene*, and it refers to a specific type of fishing net that is dragged along the bottom of the lake catching up everything in its path indiscriminately.
- **Quote for reflection:**

“Judgment in our time may well be the despised doctrine. We cringe at the exaggerated language about judgment, and we lament that the church has often misused judgment language to bash and scare sinners. We do not need that, but we do need to recover a healthy understanding of judgment, which undeniably was a central feature of Jesus’ message both with regard to Israel and as part of his kingdom preaching... How can the modern church find the balance to do justice to the grace and magnanimous love of God and at the same time treat fairly the warnings of judgment, metaphorical as indeed they are? Whatever else we do, we fail if we do not provide the warning that how we live really matters to God and that we will be held accountable.” Klyne Snodgrass

Dialogue Questions (some example questions for this content above)

- What are the dominating ideas in each parable? Compare, connect and contrast them!
- What themes, if any, do you see between all three? (are there connections to previous parables?)
- What is Jesus emphasizing here... the cost of discipleship? Or the great value of the Kingdom?
- Does it encourage you that some find the Kingdom by luck while others are left to effort?
- Do you think it is a coincidence that both images in the first two parables have significant monetary worth? Explore the connection between wealth and discipleship.

Implication Questions (some example questions/challenges that engage real life now)

- Reflect on the idea of “hiddenness.” You could read Matt. 11:25. Have you ever felt like aspects of God and his Kingdom are hidden? If yes, why do you think God works this way?
- Does anyone have any stories about great sacrifice from their apprenticeship to Jesus?
- Do we as kingdom people gather indiscriminately like the net? Trusting that Jesus will do the sorting. Or do we preeminently judge and sort people on our own?
- What are your reflections on the quote about judgment? Note the posture of this question shouldn't be to solve debates but create pastoral space for honest reflection.