

How Rich Are You? in your...

- ✦ field of dreams? (v.44)
- ✦ jewelry box? (v.45-46)
- ✦ livewell? (v.47-50)
- ✦ wine cellar? (v.51-52)

In the Name of Jesus, source and center of all riches, dear heirs of heaven's kingdom:

Who could guess the top priorities in your life? What you consider your greatest riches? Used to be your checkbook and calendar told the story, but who prints those out anymore? Hard times have a way of exposing the true heart of everyone. After a family house fire you'll often hear, "Things can be replaced, but not my family. We're all safe!" But what if family, wealth and your own health were lost? Would you be lost? Or still wealthy rich? At the bottom line, at your last breath, **How Rich Are You?**

✦ field of dreams? (v.44)

A couple weeks ago after I preached on Jesus' *Parable of the Sower*, one of the worshipers asked, "But what about the enemy sowing weeds in the field?" I started to share from a Professor Deutschlander workshop on preaching parables, how we're supposed to look at what's unique in each parable and preach on what's there, not what isn't there. If I'd known then what I know now, I could have said, "Stay tuned for Pastor Gawrisch's sermon next Sunday." Jesus' *Parable of the Weeds*.

This is the third week in a row now. Have you noticed where these parables are coming from? Matthew's parable chapter 13. Here Jesus is ganging up on the critics, everyone who always had a better idea what He or His disciples should be preaching. Let's follow Jesus for three parables, plus one.

"Yeh, so Pastor, I really don't care about sowing seed. I'm not a farmer, and even Pastor Gawrisch's sermon about weeds in the lawn? We have a lawn service for our condo. I'd rather go hiking."

Well, my friend, God's got you covered. Here comes Jesus: ***"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid again. In his joy, he goes away and sells all that he has and buys that field."*** This guy didn't care much. He wasn't even looking. In ancient times the rich divided their wealth three ways: for business, gold and gems as savings, buried treasure in case they had to flee. Someone didn't survive to dig up the field until this guy stumbles onto the hidden treasure reburies it, sells all he has, and makes a super real estate deal that defies your **field of dreams**.

God's *kingdom of heaven* finds folks not even looking. They trip over the treasure and realize, "This is worth all I own." "Don't know what that family has, but I want it." Jesus' gracious rule in their hearts by Word and sacrament blesses ***"all things for our enjoyment"*** (1 Timothy 6:17) – beyond **dreams**.

✦ jewelry box? (v.45-46)

"Yeh, Pastor, I'm not a hiker. I think investments in precious metals and gems are the way to go."

Have no fear; God is here! Jesus: ***"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls. When he found one very valuable pearl, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."***

Critic: "You're just a pastor. You probably don't know Grandma's pearls weren't worth much."

And you, my friend, are missing some information that recently came to my attention. Ancient pearls were valued far above gold and gems, a single pearl in the tens of millions of dollars. One Roman general financed a whole military campaign with one of his mother's pearls. Cleopatra won her bet with Mark Antony that she could host a dinner with food worth millions. She wore two pearl earrings that evening, inherited from kings of the East, each worth millions in today's dollars. After the meal's first course Cleopatra took off one earring, dropped it into a cup of vinegar, then drank the dissolved pearl.

That's the *very valuable pearl* Jesus was talking about, received by repentant faith. Your **jewelry box** trinkets can't pay. *The kingdom of heaven* is the New Jerusalem with twelve gates, each made from a single pearl. **How Rich Are You** if you get to live free and forever in a glorious place like that?

✦ **livewell?** (v.47-50)

"So far you've lost me, pastor. I'm not interested in jewelry, hiking, or farming for that matter. I can worship God out there under the blue sky in my boat." You can, but do you?

This should concern you more than anything else. Something you need to believe before too late. You're thinking too much like you're fishing in a boat with a **livewell** where you only put the good fish to keep fresh and alive. Jesus is fishing with a *dragnet*. And this season will end only one of two ways.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When the net was filled, they pulled it onto the shore. They sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but threw the bad ones away. That is how it will be at the end of the world. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous who are among them. And they will throw the wicked into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

If that sounds a bit like last Sunday's sermon where the angels separate the wheat into the barn and throw the weeds into the fiery furnace, I'm glad you were paying attention. Same lesson. Will your **livewell** help you when Christ comes again with all His holy angels to separate the good fish from the bad fish? You need to be in the Lord's **livewell** after the angels pull in the net on Judgment Day.

✦ **wine cellar?** (v.51-52)

How would you answer if Jesus asked you along with His disciples, "*Did you understand all these things?*" Faith fills the bill. Let's make sure you could answer with them, "**Yes.**"

This is why I tell anyone who asks what I do for a living about my Boss, the best Boss ever. He's not some kind of narcissistic psycho trying to mess with people's lives. God the Father and His well pleasing Son along with the dear Holy Spirit are of one essence and one mind to bless your life now. God works out everything to bring you safely to eternity in the *kingdom of heaven*. God's own Son paid the ultimate price to take away all your guilt and fill your heart and life with God's peace. I'm so grateful that Jesus gives us a plus one parable to encourage me to tell you all this, and you to pass it on.

Jesus said to them, "Did you understand all these things?" They answered him, "Yes." He said to them, "Therefore every expert in the law who has been trained as a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his treasure both new things and old things."

Many rich people will point to their fields or pearls or yachts or **wine cellar** to prove they're better than you. But in Christ's *kingdom of heaven* no wine ever goes bad. No yachts get swamped at sea and drown the owners. No super heists rob you or your insurance. And the real estate stretches beyond your imagination to infinity in the new heaven and the new earth. Pastors, teachers, staff ministers and witnessing disciples trained in the Good News of Jesus Christ bring *old treasures* from the Old Testament and *new treasures* from the New. Here Jesus' perfect life of love is on display for you. Without question He lived and died for you, for me, for all. Trust in Christ, and you are **Rich** beyond forever in God's mercy, God's peace, God's friendship. By faith you are pleasing to Him the Lover of your soul. Amen.

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