

## October 20, Message #1 Jesus On the Move- Matthew 13:45-46

I am so excited to take this journey together! This is the culmination of so much prayer, and dreaming and planning together by our leadership, and boldly seeking the Lord for what he wants for the future of Brandywine Valley Church. This series we are seeking to be ON THE MOVE as Kingdom Investors.

Some of you know this but before I was a pastor, I had a career as an investment advisor helping people invest money to help them meet their future financial goals. Kind of fun that this series, I get to combine my two careers preaching and investing... Now I also had a job for a little while working at a Harley Davidson machine shop... some if someone has Harley that they want to let me sit on while I preach next week let me know, that would be the trifecta... but I digress. The most challenging part of my role as an investment advisor, but also the most rewarding, was not the dollars and cents, or stock market projections... It was helping people get their head and heart around the idea of sacrificing money they could spend now, money in their pocket now in order to reap the exponentially larger return later when they don't have the earning power they once had and are ready to retire. And when the light bulb would go on, they began to see that investing their money was actually not a sacrifice really, it was more of an opportunity and invitation to reap the far greater return later. And many clients would come back and say, "I wish I would have invested more and started sooner!" By the way... that's free advice- I won't charge you for that!

What I've come to learn as I have grown in my faith and life in ministry is this same principle applies to investing in the kingdom of heaven, in fact infinitely more so. **Matthew 6:20 Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.** Not only this, but we literally can't take earthly treasure with us when we die can we? How do we store up treasures in heaven? By investing our earthly resources now (Our time, talents, financial treasures) in supporting and expanding the spiritual kingdom of Jesus on Earth. Jesus invites us to a kingdom investment opportunity where we reap exceedingly, abundantly more than we could ever ask or imagine.

As your pastor, that's my heart's desire for you throughout this series. I want each of us to become kingdom investors, **not because God wants something FROM you, but because He wants something FOR you.** There are over 2000 Scripture passages that talk about money and possessions. Nearly half of Jesus' parables are about what we do with our resources. Why? Because God wants something FOR you, not something FROM you. So, over the next five weeks we are going to study five of these parables of Jesus and learn how to be ON THE MOVE as kingdom investors.

Our first parable today is one of the shortest parables of Jesus, only 2 verses, and yet so profound, in it contains the grand story of the Bible. Let me show you. **Matthew 13:45-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.**

*When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*

Pearls have been sought after for their beauty and value for thousands of years. Typically we think of pearls as small enough for a woman to wear on a string around her neck. But did you know that the **Giga Pearl** holds the record as the largest pearl in the world, weighing in at a whopping 61 lbs...that's a 3rd grader! Who owns this pearl? This guy in the ridiculous suit, Abraham Reyes, who inherited it from his aunt. Here's what's fascinating, the pearl was unknowingly hidden within a giant clam his grandfather had purchased from a fisherman as a gift for Reyes' aunt in 1959... "Happy birthday, here's a giant clam, I hope you have some febreze." Even when she opened it up and saw it, she didn't know it was valuable, for decades she had it sitting around, until 2016 when Abraham inherited it and took it to a certified pearl expert. Guess the value...The estimated value of this pearl- between over 100 million. But to Abraham, this pearl is priceless, he said he would never sell it because it is his greatest treasure.

**[Blank Slide]** I don't know if the merchant in this parable found a Giga Pearl, but it's clear this merchant immediately knew this pearl's infinite value. In fact, it's so priceless, he was willing to sell everything he had to possess it and that's exactly what this merchant does. So that's it, a pretty simple story- And typically, how most people come to understand this parable is this: Each of us are like merchants, and the kingdom of heaven is the pearl. And getting heaven is so valuable, so priceless that it is worth sacrificing everything, doing everything you need to do in order to obtain it. And in a sense, there is truth to this- Jesus said to his disciples that anyone who gives up houses or lands or even family for his sake will inherit 100 fold in the eternal kingdom. I've found this principle to be true in my life, that whatever Jesus calls me to give up, whatever risks he asks me to take bring me deeper into life with God and I will never regret.

And while this principle is true, this is NOT what this parable is about. You want to know what is so shocking about what Jesus is saying? **We aren't the merchant seeking pearls, Jesus is!** And this completely flips the meaning of the parable on its ear. Let me just take a moment to show you why we know this from the context of Matthew 13. Matthew 13 is a collection of 6 parables of Jesus. Each parable begins with the phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." And each parable has a main character- A farmer with seed, a man in a field, a merchant looking for pearls, and a fisherman with a net. In verse 37, Jesus reveals the key to understanding all six of these parables by telling us he is the main character. He is the farmer sowing seed, the fisherman with the net, and Jesus is the merchant seeking pearls. See if we are the merchant in the parable and heaven is the pearl, that means that Christianity at its core would really be no different from every other religion. Every religion teaches that we are merchant. We do the good works, pray a certain number of times a day, go through a series of religious hoops, clean ourselves up even in order to hopefully give up enough things in order to earn the pearl of heaven. But what makes Christianity utterly unique is that Jesus the merchant seeks us first, he finds us so valuable that he does all the work, all the sacrifice in order to be with us in the heavenly kingdom forever! This is the parable form of the greatest verse in the Bible- **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that HE GAVE his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

**What is our response to Jesus the merchant?**

**1. Gratitude.** I've noticed sometimes I'm grateful for little moments in life but take for granted the enormous blessings in life. About a year ago I was meeting at Brew Haha in Trolley square, and after my meeting I came out to my car parked along the road and my front bumper was dented up, and my car was only about 6 months old at that point...but then I looked and on my windshield was a note. "I'm so sorry for the trouble I caused you today. I'm sure you were annoyed when you found your car dented, especially because it looks new. I left my number so that we can get it taken care of through my insurance. Regretfully, KC." I remember being so grateful for that note. Many people would have just left. And so I called her and we exchanged info and I said, "You know, let me just say thank you for this note, it warmed my heart today and gave me a little hope for humanity, I want to pass that on to others." Now listen, someone denting my car and leaving a note makes me grateful, HOW MUCH MORE should I be grateful to the Lord for the gospel! My life wasn't just dented, my life was dead in my sins and rebellion against God when Jesus rescued me. And that's your story too if you know Jesus. Jesus didn't come to make bad people good, and good people better, he came to make dead people alive!

**Hebrews 12:28** *Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.* Does the gospel melt your heart? Does it pump you up and fill you with gratitude, reverence and awe? Works-based religion can't do this, but the gospel can! It's easy to get into a rut of thinking about your spiritual life as duty. Just going through the motions and checking the boxes. Sing songs, listen to sermons, read your Bible, pray, give money...and yet our hearts are disconnected emotionally and spiritually, maybe it's been awhile since you've been stirred up, teared up just thinking about what he's done for you. I think back to the moment the gospel first melted my heart. For me that was senior year of high school: There was nothing in me that deserved his grace and forgiveness. Let's just say I wasn't exactly a pearl. But **Romans 5:8** *While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Beauty is in the eye of the beholder...and Jesus beheld me, and each of us and says- "I love and treasure you, I gave myself to have you." Maybe you are here today and you are still stuck in work-based religion, trying to earn the pearl. Today would you accept Jesus' offer of grace- this gift that you can't do anything to earn? You can accept this gift today by grace by simply asking...I will lead you in a few moments in a prayer to do that today.

If you have already embraced this free gift of salvation, I want to challenge you this week: **Take time to express to Jesus your gratitude**, let this stir your affections for the beauty of the gospel, let God's grace upon you stir in you thanksgiving. Write letter to him, pray to him in thanksgiving, sing a song to him. Shane & Shane song on my morning walks all week- "When I think about the Lord, How He saved me, how He raised me, How He filled me with the Holy Ghost, Healed me to the uttermost, When I think about the Lord, How He picked me up, turned me around, How He set my feet on solid ground, And it makes me wanna shout, Alleluia, thank You, Jesus, Lord, You're worthy of all the glory, And all the honor, and all the praise!"

**2. Generosity.** There are lots of ways to motivate people to be generous. I think back to those Sarah McGlachlan commercials for the ASPCA, with her song *Angel* playing in the background with all sad dogs and cats...guitling us into adopting one. That's why there's memes like this

one “Hi, I’m Sarah McGlachlan and I’m about to ruin your day.” That’s one way to motivate people- kitty and puppy guilt. This is often how works-based religion motivates generosity- through religious guilt. But this isn’t the motive of gospel-based generosity. Look how Paul motivated the church in Corinth to financial generosity. *2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

Look to Jesus’ generosity in the gospel he says! As Christians, the deepest motive for generosity isn’t because it feels good. Although it definitely does, in fact I have found few things bring me joy more than generosity! It’s not because we have a duty a Christian. We do! Listen, the deepest motive isn’t even that giving to ON THE MOVE initiative is going to be a huge blessing to our community and help us accomplish our mission of reaching more people for Jesus. It will! The deepest motivation is because we are the priceless pearl that Jesus gave up everything to have. And his generosity was not begrudging or out of guilt...it was joy!

*Hebrews 12:2 For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The definition of *sacrifice is to give up something you love, for something you love more.* This is exactly what Jesus did for us.

Haven’t you found this to be true? At age 21, I sacrificed months and months of Olive Garden tips that I saved up in order to buy Shannan an engagement ring. But it was out of joy, not begrudgingly, because I was willing to give up something I love in this case the security of money, for someone I loved more. This is what gospel-based generosity does in us. The sacrifice of our resources- our time, talents and financial treasures- isn’t actually a sacrifice at all when it’s motivated by the gospel.

This is what I have experienced as I’ve taken steps of faith into greater generosity over the last 15 years. That the more the gospel is at the center of my heart, the less giving feels like a sacrifice and the more gratitude, joy overflows in generosity and opportunity. I don’t have to give, I get to give! And there is no greater joy I have experienced than giving to people and projects that are all about leading people to the gospel of Jesus. That’s what the ON THE MOVE initiative is all about. What if...we began to have Jesus’ eyes- that we saw the community around us as Jesus sees them- as precious pearls of great worth and beauty- wanting to see them enter the Kingdom? What if...our building could be maximized to bring those priceless pearls into the kingdom?

On your way out of the service today, we have something special for each of you: our ON THE MOVE Vision Guide. I’m so excited about this guide not only because it’s visually beautiful, and tells you everything you need to know about the vision and our financial initiative, but because of the stories of people in our congregation you will read, I promise you, they are going to be so encouraging and inspiring and capture the heart of our initiative so well. At the end of the vision guide you will see an FAQ that will address the questions that might be swirling around in your

mind. I want to ask you to take the time to read through this guide a couple times over the next few weeks.

Lastly, inside the vision guide is a commitment card. We have two goals for our ON THE MOVE initiative: **Our Primary goal- which is 100% participation.** If someone dropped off a check for the entirety of the renovations, would we have accomplished our goal? NO! Because this is about each of our journey of resilient discipleship with Jesus. Our **Secondary Goal: In order to accomplish our vision for our building that I spoke about in the vision video, we need to raise 5.5M over 36 months.** We aren't asking you to pull out your checkbooks or scan a code to make a pledge today. What I am asking each of us to do is **to make a commitment to making a financial commitment.**

Begin talking with your family, begin praying and asking the Lord for a number, in the coming weeks I will share with you the process of how we came to our pledge number. But begin thinking through what the Lord might want you to sacrifice. And what I promise you that you will find is an invitation into joy, and opportunity to join the kingdom of God, the rescue mission of the merchant Jesus!

**At Benediction:** Challenge and importance of coming each week. Next week, we are going to talk about our mission as kingdom investors from Jesus' parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, and more details of the ON THE MOVE vision. We also have a cool and unique gift to give you next week that you don't want to miss out on.