

Introduction: The tragedy of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-22 is that he left Jesus' presence, deceived by the security and value of his wealth. For him, Proverbs 18:11 was his guiding life principle: "The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall." How tragic. But for us as children of God's Kingdom, the reason we can with such confidence "sell all that we have" in order to gain the blessings of this Kingdom in Matthew 13:44-46, is because our assets are absolutely secure in Christ. We will not in the end experience any lasting, painful diminishment of what really matters because Jesus is such a good Householder who knows how to keep our life's valuables intact and secure, according to this week's parable about the "well-provisioned house" in Matthew 13:51-52. As a protection from the misery and idolatry of the rich young ruler, let's revisit the parables of wealth in Matthew 13 – so that we may be reminded *of our real treasure in the Kingdom of God*.

Monday: Matthew 13:44-46 & 13:51-52. We will see the ultimate rejection of Christ by His hometown in Matthew 13:57. We can therefore leave the parable of the net, Matthew 13:47-52, and its theme of eternal punishment until then – since it is this kind of scorn which prepares the way for eternal doom in hell. We therefore again focus on the wealth parables (Mt. 13:44-46) – but this time as a prelude to the saying about the Householder of God's Kingdom in Matthew 13:51-52, leaving the sober theme of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 13:50), until we come to Mt. 13:57.

Turning to verses 44-46, then, we remind ourselves of the *cost to Jesus* of making these parables into a reality. In other words, did we not see Christ's costly love displayed in the parables of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price? Who better than Jesus knows what it is like to "sell everything He had" in order to purchase us as His "hidden treasure" (Mt. 13:44)? Who better than He knows how to search for us and claim us as His "pearl of great price?" (Mt. 13:45-46)

Let us therefore establish this fact firmly in our thankful hearts: Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that is glorious and beautiful in the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is the Sower of the seed of the Gospel in Matthew 13:37 *and* He is the One who searches for us as His treasure and purchases us "with all He possesses" in Matthew 13:44-46!

Meditate and Pray: Ask the Father to reveal the searching and finding love of Jesus in all its beauty - especially to covenant children who have been robbed of the spiritual joy of their youth by the lusts and promises of the world. May they "turn their eyes upon Jesus" as the treasure of their souls once again.

Hymn # 481:

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's a light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!*

Refrain

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

*Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
Over us sin no more hath dominion—
For more than conquerors we are!*

*His Word shall not fail you—He promised;
Believe Him, and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!*

Tues/Weds: Matthew 13:51 and Isaiah 50:4-5, 50:10. At the conclusion of His parables, Jesus penetratingly asks His disciples this question: “Do you understand these things?” The question is deeper and more important than we may realize at first. Being a teacher who imparts heavenly, life-saving wisdom by making His hearers truly understand what God says is *actually* one of the highest compliments we can pay *to*, and one of the greatest attributes we can recognize *in*, Jesus Christ. For example, look at these verses which point out Jesus’ great wisdom in teaching His church, both in the Old and New Testaments:

Daniel 12:3 The Puritans believed this verse pointed to the ministry of the Gospel in the church, but it also ultimately applies to Jesus’ teaching ministry, since He is Truth itself:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who impart wisdom shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Isaiah 42:1-4: Quoted in Matthew 12:18-20, these verses stress Jesus’ gentle yet effective teaching of the lost, by His words saving even the bruised reed and the smoldering wick:

*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;
a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench...*

Isaiah 50:4-5, 10: The Suffering Servant of God, known in Isaiah to be Jesus Christ, declares of His teaching ability:

*The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.
Morning by morning He awakens; He awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward ...
Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*

Closing Prayer: Father in Heaven, thank you for giving us your Son and through His ministry giving also the gift of the Holy Spirit, by whom you teach us the ways of your covenant. Thank you that, by your Spirit, you are able to give us one heart and one way, uniting us in the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Lord Jesus, we rejoice to recognize that your Father poured upon you the Holy Spirit of wisdom and inspiration without limit. Because of this great donation, you, as the Head of our humanity, were able to live a sinless life of faith, a life which you now substitute in place of our guilt-ridden lives so that we can have the new life of the Spirit. Please be at work to sanctify and comfort your church on earth by that same Spirit, whom with you and the Father we love and adore. Amen.

Thurs/Fri: Matthew 13:16; 13:51 & Matthew 28:18-20. We see from Scripture how exalted Jesus’ teaching is, and how salvation is promised to those who hear Him and understand. This is the benediction Jesus pronounces on His disciples in Matthew 13:16, and the purpose of His promised presence with them throughout the ages: so that they can “teach His followers everything He has commanded” (Matthew 28:20). Christ continues by His Spirit to teach His church in order that we might understand and be saved!

But how exactly does Jesus’ work to enable us to understand? Is it not true that we often *fail* to understand, and stumble in darkness *because of* our ignorance of His Word? Well, there is a promise not to be missed in His question, “Do you understand these things?” in Matthew 13:51. It is a promise that, by His Spirit, He works to help us “make the right connections” in our minds, between what we perceive and what is real.

After all, that is the definition of the verb here translated to understand: *syniemi*. It means to “put together mentally” or to “comprehend.” As one old scholar put it, “It means to join together the perception with the thing perceived” (Thayer). This is what Jesus means when He asks His disciples if they have understood the Kingdom truths contained in His parables. And He knows the answer to His question, doesn’t He? He knows His Holy Spirit has already revealed the “secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven” to them in Matthew 13:11! And He is just as determined by His Holy Spirit to reveal those same saving secrets to us! Hallelujah!

Meditate and Pray: Let us magnify King Jesus because His teaching is richer and wiser even than that of King Solomon. Let us ask Him to impart His saving wisdom to us and our families, so that we can “put together” the truth of His Word with the life-situations we face. May He help us “make the connections” between Kingdom truth and the reality of our lives! “Lord, save us from living in fantasy land! Do not let us live a lie. Cause the teaching which comes from your lips to open our eyes and hearts both to know and to act upon what is really true. Amen.”

Sat/Sun: Matthew 13:51-52 and Hebrews 3:1-6. Jesus knows how to supply our every need, including our need for life-saving teaching. Because He is such a good provider, He is given management over the entire house of God. In other words, to use the title from so many of Matthew’s parables, Jesus is the “householder” (or “landowner” NIV) who can invite sinners into His Father’s house and out of the desolate homelessness of this world. I use this word “householder” or “homeowner” from Matthew 13:52 with particular thankfulness in that it establishes Jesus Christ as the One in charge of God’s Kingdom. Let’s look at some examples of how this word describes Jesus Christ as in charge of all affairs:

- He is the “owner of the vineyard” in the parable of the tenants (Mt 21:33 reads “landowner”)
- He is the “owner of the house” who is ready when the thief breaks in (Mt. 24:43)
- He is the “landowner” who pays the same wages of grace to each worker in his vineyard, despite the complaints of his workers in Mt. 20:11
- He is the “landowner” who plants the good seed into which the tares are secretly planted in Mt. 13:27
- He is the “manager of the house” who is able to select all that is needed for the whole house, from the well-provisioned storeroom of God’s Kingdom in Matthew 13:52.

Meditate and Pray: What is the lesson from this word? In each of these cases, how thankful we should be that God the Father has entrusted the running of His Kingdom into the hands of the only capable and perfect “Householder” who is able to manage without sin the affairs of God’s Kingdom, and the daily ups and downs of the lives of God’s subjects. Only Jesus Christ deserves the accolade: “Well done, good and faithful Servant!” Only Jesus is worthy to receive the highest place in God’s house. We are unprofitable servants, who in the end can only say: “We have only done our duty, and imperfectly at that” (Luke 17:10). But Christ has done all things well, and His invitation to us to enter into the house of His Father can never be challenged or brought into question. Amen!