

# Nothing Matters More

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Preacher: Donald Smith

[ 0 : 00 ] to it together. Father, we thank you and praise you for your words. Lord, we ask that you would speak to us now through it by your Spirit, that you might make us evermore into the likeness of your Son, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Sometimes when things are small, we assume, don't we, that they are insignificant. You put together some flat-packed furniture, there's a little screw left over, you think, how important can it be? And before you know it, the whole thing is a crumpled mess. Sometimes things that appear pretty small and unimportant can make all the difference in the world. I was reading a couple of weeks ago a story of Mariner 1. It was a satellite that NASA launched in 1962, hoping to send its latest spacecraft past Venus on a planetary flyby. The probe was prepared for launch, all was going well and smoothly. It took off into the night sky and began its journey into the depths of space. But within a few minutes, the rocket made a turn it was never supposed to make. And instead of heading upwards into space, it turned downwards and started heading towards the eastern coast of the United States.

And flight operators had no choice but to hit the self-destruct button before the wayward rocket caused any serious damage. What had gone wrong?

After five days of intense post-flight analysis, engineers found somewhere buried deep in the guidance computer's code, a missing hyphen. One missing hyphen, years of work, millions and millions of dollars all exploded into the night sky. It's unsurprisingly gone down as the most expensive hyphen in history. Sometimes something that can appear pretty small and insignificant can matter a lot more than we might think. We've heard a lot, haven't we, over the last few weeks about the kind of unimpressive, unassuming nature of the kingdom of heaven. But in this last parable, Jesus wants to remind us that small as it might sometimes seem, the kingdom of heaven is of eternal significance.

[ 3 : 17 ] It's our first point this evening, the kingdom of heaven is of eternal significance. This chapter of Matthew's gospel has taught us, hasn't it, that the kingdom of heaven, that is Christ's kingdom on earth, that the church, it might at times appear small, it might often appear weak, it might not seem to be very powerful. Often its value is hidden. Its message will be received by everyone who hears it. But Jesus draws his teaching to a close by saying, just because the kingdom of heaven doesn't appear to be all that much right now, do not let that distract you from the fact that nothing, nothing, nothing in this world matters more.

Nothing matters more because your relationship to the kingdom of heaven will shape your eternity. It might appear small and weak now, but whether people are citizens of this kingdom or not, will be the deciding factor when the end of time comes.

In this last parable there, verse 47 to 50 of our passage this evening, Jesus compares the kingdom to a net that is scooping up everything. The net mentioned there in verse 47 is specifically a big kind of drag net hung vertically between two boats with weights at the bottom and floats at the top.

The point is, when you read net here, we shouldn't be thinking one of those little like butterfly catchers that kids run around with on the beach. This is not that kind of net. Not only will it definitely catch something, but it will definitely take up everything.

It drags up everything beneath the surface. No one is escaping in this parable. It is all-inclusive. Just as we saw that the kingdom of heaven was the whole world back in the parable of the weeds, so too here we are told that everyone, everywhere, will be answerable to the king of this kingdom.

[ 5 : 48 ] Then the net is dragged ashore, and every single fish is sorted through according to whether it is good or bad. The good are kept, the bad are thrown away. That, Jesus says, is what it will be like at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the evil from the righteous, and the evil will be thrown into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Those are fearful words, aren't they? Everyone who is not found in the kingdom of heaven will be thrown into a fiery furnace forever, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. These are the same words we heard Jesus utter in the parable of the weeds a couple of weeks ago. And when things are repeated in the Bible, it's usually because the author really wants us to pay attention.

Jesus wants us to know that this, right, this is where the world is heading. There is a judgment day coming.

And for those not in the kingdom of heaven, that will be a fearful and terrifying day that will lead to a fearful and terrifying eternity.

[ 7 : 39 ] To hear these words rightly, we must remember, mustn't we, why Jesus issues such a fearful warning?

Why would anyone utter such terrifying words? I don't know if you saw a couple of weeks ago, I'm sure you probably did see it, it was all over the news, there was an enormous hurricane, wasn't there?

Advancing across the Gulf of Mexico, heading towards the western coastline of Florida. It was enormous, it was powerful, it was without a doubt a threat, wasn't it?

To anyone who found themselves caught in it, if you were in its path, you were not safe. Now what would you think, I wonder, what would you think of the meteorologists if they saw this hurricane coming on their radars or satellites, whatever they use, I'm not a weatherman, what would you think, right, whatever they use, if they knew it was coming and just sort of sat on their hands and didn't say anything?

They didn't say a word because they didn't want people to be afraid or they decided not to mention it because they want people to think meteorologists are nice people who only ever brought good news.

[ 9 : 15 ] We'd be appalled, wouldn't we? We'd be genuinely disgusted in a way if someone withheld a warning from people who were standing in the path of life-threatening danger.

When people in dangerous situations are born, if they're told, if you remain where you are, your life is in danger, nobody's sitting there thinking, are they?

Well, that's a bit harsh. Nobody's wondering why they were so blunt with their message. Sometimes people can be shocked, can't they, by the strength of Jesus' language.

Sometimes people wonder why a man who is supposed to be loving spends so much time talking about hell. But it is because Jesus is loving, it is because Jesus is loving that he utters these warnings.

because if people are heading toward danger, there is nothing more loving you can do for them than warn them of what is going to happen if they carry on in the direction they're going.

[ 10 : 41 ] In warning people of hell, Jesus is not being cruel, but caring. Let me just utter that same warning out of that same care.

Friends, if your faith and trust are not in Jesus this evening, you are on a very, very dangerous path. And you need to hear Jesus' warning tonight. Without Jesus in your life, you are going to a place where your sins will meet their just punishment.

And you will not die for a moment. You will not suffer for a while.

You will spend eternity in the lake of fire that we read of earlier in Revelation. Jesus warns you of that place because he longs for you to turn around.

[ 12 : 06 ] Repent and believe in him so that you will not go there. It is, in many ways, a terrifying caribou.

But it is a loving warning. And for the disciples listening to Jesus teaching here, it is a necessary reminder, isn't it, of the eternal significance of God's kingdom.

When we focus on the kingdom of heaven's smallness, or we dwell on its weakness, or we focus on the weeds that seem to surround it, it can be easy to forget, can't it, that nothing matters more.

Nothing matters more to your life. Nothing matters more in the life of those around you than their response, than our response to this king and his kingdom.

Nothing matters more in life than whether people know Jesus because that alone will determine people's eternal destination. And so I think part of Jesus' purpose, or perhaps Jesus' primary purpose, in telling this parable is to remind and encourage his disciples on their mission to make him known to the ends of the earth so that as many as we can reach might hear about Jesus and

give their lives to him.

[13:43] He's saying, isn't he, don't let the small, unimpressive nature of Christ's kingdom dull your awareness to its eternal significance.

Nothing matters more. The kingdom of heaven might appear small, but it is eternally significant. And that is why Jesus, I think, goes on immediately to basically send his disciples out on mission in verses 51 and 52. Here we see that the kingdom of heaven is a treasure that needs sharing. Second point this evening, the kingdom of heaven is a treasure that needs sharing. After this kind of block of parables, Jesus turns his disciples and asks, doesn't he there in verse 51, have you understood all these things?

And the disciples, well, they say, don't they? Yes. Great. I mean, not always the response we get from the disciples, is it? But this time, they have definitely understood at least something.

[14:56] And so Jesus sends them out to share the treasure they have just been taught, saying, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.

There's a few things here that I think are worth drawing out. First, the disciples, right, they say, don't they, that they have understood what Jesus has said.

It becomes kind of plain later on that they have definitely not understood everything Jesus has taught them perfectly. But they absolutely have understood something.

And so Jesus is happy, isn't he, for them to go sharing the treasures they have. A complete knowledge and perfect understanding of everything Jesus has ever said and done is clearly not what Jesus demands of his followers before they go out sharing the treasures of his kingdom. He knows here, doesn't he, that his disciples haven't fully got their head around everything at this stage. But he still wants them to go and share what they do have and do know.

[16:21] I mean, he immediately, doesn't he, he likens his unlearned disciples, these were fishermen. Pharisees would describe them as uneducated men. He immediately describes them as scribes.

Scribes trained for kingdom work. Scribes were the scholars of their day. I think professors or something similar that the university educated higher-ups who knew their stuff.

Trained in the scriptures to teach what is true. And now Jesus turns to his disciples, to all of his disciples and says, that is you. That is you.

You are the scribes of this kingdom. You who have chosen to follow me. You who have been made disciples, you are the ones to go and teach what you have been taught. God. It doesn't require a university education.

It doesn't require a seminary degree. You don't need to be of a certain class or background. You just need to have come to Jesus and learn from Jesus. Then you too are trained as a scribe of this kingdom to go.

[17:31] Go and teach and share what you know even if your knowledge and understanding are not yet complete. needs. Sharing the treasures of this kingdom is something that every disciple who has learned anything from Jesus is called to go and do.

And what we have to share is treasure. Remember the two parables we were looking at last week? There is nothing is there. There is nothing that compares to the value of the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing that compares to the treasure that we have to share. It is worth giving up everything else we have for because with this kingdom comes forgiveness for every wrong we have ever done in Christ.

With this kingdom comes redemption of our every sin. With this kingdom comes the promise of eternal life because of the resurrection of Jesus. With this kingdom comes adoption into God's family made sons and daughters of God and so heirs to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for us.

There is nothing more valuable. It is treasure and it is a treasure that needs to be shared. The language Jesus uses there at the end of verse 52 says bring out it is really almost throwing out casting out.

[19:07] It is not just about putting up on display for anyone to come and see. It is not about saying look what I have got it is about giving people the chance to take it for themselves.

And when we remember where Jesus has just left us with his last parable that is something we will long to do isn't it?

That is something we will long to do because there is nothing there is nothing that matters more. Not only is this treasure worth sharing because of the riches it brings with it. This treasure is so important to share because of what it saves us from. Only by having this treasure that is faith and trust in Jesus alone to save us from our sins only by having that treasure can we be counted can anyone be counted among the good and righteous fish in that parable. Because we know don't we that there is no goodness in ourselves there is no lasting righteousness there is nothing we can do to clean ourselves up before a perfectly holy God.

[ 20 : 33 ] But the glory of the gospel is that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus his righteousness becomes our righteousness. righteousness and so we are counted as perfect in God's sight not because of what we have done but because what Jesus has done for us.

That is our treasure and it is a treasure we can share and share and share and share and never become a penny poorer ourselves.

there is nothing to lose from sharing this treasure but it will bring others into incomparable riches and save some from the fatal path they are currently on.

nothing matters more. We have treasure to share and we have treasure that needs sharing.

Treasure is as Jesus says there both new and old I think all that he is saying there is that all that has been said all that has been taught in the law and the prophets before he came is well worth teaching just as we were doing going through Genesis in the mornings but teach also he says what is what is new that is what Jesus himself has taught both revealing new truths and shining light on the old that we might gain ever more from them.

We learn from that don't we that the treasure we have to share is the treasure we find in the word of God. That is where this treasure is.

[ 22 : 27 ] This book is more valuable than gold because these are God's words that reveal to us the life and hope we have in this world in spite of our own sinfulness and brokenness.

Share this treasure that people might find life in Jesus by bowing to him as the king above all kings nothing matters more. But we are reminded finally at the end of this chapter that while nothing matters more than the kingdom of heaven there will always be some who reject it.

A third and final point this evening the kingdom of heaven will always be rejected by some. Verse 54 there seems like it's about to bring this section to a close.

That is the usual way that Matthew ends these teaching blocks in his gospel. There's five main teaching blocks in Matthew's gospel. It's how he structures this gospel.

He works around these major teaching blocks of Jesus. This is the end of a third of them. We've had the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 to 7. We had Jesus sending his disciples out in mission in chapter 10 and now the kingdom parables here in chapter 13.

[ 23 : 52 ] There's two more coming in the chapters that follow. But the end of the first four of those blocks of teaching that Matthew records for us, at the end of each of them, we get something like this.

Jesus finished teaching and went away from there. And on the other occasions, the curtain falls, end of section before Matthew moves on to the next episode as it were.

But here on this occasion, we get a little epilogue. It's like those scenes at the end of the Marvel films after the credits.

One last thing before you go. And here it is Jesus doing exactly what he has just told his disciples to go and do.

He is sharing his treasure in his own hometown. Verse 54, coming to his hometown, he taught them in their synagogue. And these people are astonished by Jesus.

[ 25 : 01 ] They marvel at what he says and what he does. But they do not bow to him as their king. They are astounded by his teaching but their response can basically be summarized as who does this guy think he is?

So much so that they are offended at him. As we go about sharing our invaluable treasure with a world that desperately needs to respond to this good news and bow to this king.

Remember not everyone is going to come leaping and bounding with joy for what you shared with them. There will be people who hear the hurricane warnings and think I don't believe it's coming or I don't think it's really that important.

I'm just going to wait out here. Thank you very much. I think I'll be just fine where I am. That's not only the response that the last couple that the few parables of chapter 13 have taught us to expect.

It is the very response the king himself gets from his own people. I think this little narrative is specifically placed here by Matthew as a helpful reminder to disciples who are about to go and share their treasure.

[ 26 : 39 ] Look at how the king's own family responded to his teaching. As you go out remember that there is hard ground.

Not all the seeds is going to land on good soil. And we need to hear that not only as a kind of helpful forewarning of the reactions we might receive but as a reminder of what we are responsible for and what we are not responsible for.

Sometimes we share the gospel in really fumbling ways. I'm very familiar with that myself. Even if we did our best in the moment we go away thinking if only I'd explained it better or more winsomely if only I'd said it with a smile on my face that's usually my problem then maybe their reaction would have been different.

King Jesus himself went and taught with all knowledge and wisdom and his own people rejected it. And you can't do it better than him.

We are responsible for sharing our treasure. We need to go and share it but we learn here don't we that we are not responsible for people's response to it.

[ 28 : 09 ] You can be the most faithful well prepared winsome evangelist. That is a great thing. Please try and be that person. But you're not going to do a better job than Jesus and yet even he was rejected.

the soil he sowed and proved to be rocky ground so don't be discouraged. Don't be discouraged if you find your message rejected because you're following in the very footsteps of Jesus himself. But at the same time don't let that discourage you from doing all that you can to share the treasure that you have because treasure it is.

There is nothing more valuable that you have. there is nothing more important than you can tell people.

There is nothing more important than bowing to the king of the kingdom of heaven. It comes with riches and blessings that far surpass and eternally outlast everything the kingdoms of this world have to offer.

[ 29 : 28 ] It saves us from eternity in a place more terrifying than we can possibly imagine. It is a treasure and it is a treasure that needs sharing because it is eternally significant.

Where you are going to spend eternity depends entirely entirely on your relationship to Jesus. That is true of you and me and it is true of every single individual who we see through the week every single one of them.

So let us respond rightly to Jesus first of all in repentance and belief submitting him to him as our king and then let us go and share the treasure he has given us that many more might know salvation in Christ nothing nothing matters more let us pray father we we do thank you and praise you that because of your great love for us you warn us of what is waiting for us should we live in our sin and never turn to Jesus but we thank you that you give us that warning that we might turn repent and believe and give our lives to

Jesus and submit to him as our king Lord may every one of us here this evening be doing that and we thank you Lord that when you bring us into your kingdom you teach us and give us treasures to share that are more valuable than anything this world has to offer and so give us boldness and courage to go and share what we have been taught knowing that while not everyone will respond to it some will and will find life and hope in your name we thank you and praise you for your grace in reaching out to sinners such as us and we pray that you would continue to draw more and more people into your kingdom for your glory Amen