

Pentecost 9, July 30, 2023

Text: Matthew 13:44-52

Theme: You Are a Treasure or at Least a Good Fish

We look in the mirror and many of us do not see a treasure.

Many of us do not see a pearl of great price or even a good fish. But regardless of what we see or don't see, Jesus sees clearly. Jesus was sent in the world to find us and redeem us. We are that treasure He found in a field. We are that pearl He bought with His life and soul when He died on the cross and suffered Hell. But it is difficult for us to grasp that because we do not easily see what He sees.

We look at ourselves, and we see all the faults, foibles, and failures. We see the secret sins of which only we are aware. Of course, we also see the flaws of which others readily inform us on an ongoing basis. We see the facades that we put up to hide the truth of what we know to be in our hearts, and because we have such difficulty seeing ourselves as treasures, we also struggle to see others as treasures.

In fact, we sometimes work to tear others down so that they will be below us. We might even find ourselves saying things like "well at least I'm not as bad as _____" fill in the blank with your own personal whipping boy. This is not helpful to the kingdom. It is not our responsibility to sort the fish as it were. We could never

know a good fish from a bad fish. Only Jesus can do that because only Jesus can see our hearts.

Jesus says in the last lines of the Gospel for today,

“‘Have you understood all these things?’ They said to him, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Therefore 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.’”

A scribe is one who is a student and the word “trained” is the word from which we get “disciple” which also means student. Jesus’ point is that if you study His Word, you will be trained for the kingdom of Heaven and the more you are trained the less likely you will be to see yourself as anything less than a treasure. And once you see yourself as a treasure, a pearl of great price, you will automatically begin to see others likewise.

I read that we have an epidemic of low self-esteem in our nation today. But Jesus gives us the solution. If we place our esteem in whatever we can do or whatever we think is good or valuable, we have our measurements all off. I remember when we had a bathroom remodeled by a friend and when he had finished tiling the shower everything ran at an angle. You felt like you were in the funhouse looking at the shower wall. He had forgotten that old

houses settle and nothing is plumb. You have to use a plumbline and find true north and south before you can tile a wall so he had to rip all the tile out and do it again. If we build our perceptions of ourselves or others on some line from this world, we will be completely askew. If we compare ourselves to what the community says is good, or if we measure our worth by what our community says is valuable, we will always be left empty. We have to use God as our plumbline. Only God will keep us true. If we use God as our plumbline, we will see ourselves for the valuable treasures we are and then we will see others likewise.

It is difficult not to buy into the ideas around us. It is hard not to allow social media, Fox news and CNN to sort our fish for us, telling us what is good and what is bad. We are surrounded by those voices from the world far more than we are listening to God. The only solution is to increase the amount of time we listen to God.

My brother loved to build models and I hated them. He was patient. He would carefully glue one little piece and then patiently wait for it to dry before moving on to the next little piece. I was more of the snap-together ilk. I had no patience and when I tried to glue a model it always ended in disaster. Becoming a disciple is much the same. There is no snap-together model for becoming a disciple. It requires slow and patient study. Careful listening and

time, lots of time. That is why we offer nine bible studies every week during the school year. That is why we have Vacation Bible School. That is why we have a Preschool and a Sunday School. It takes years and years of patient study for the Word of God to work on you and for you to begin to see yourself the way Jesus sees you and then to see others as Jesus sees them. But devote the time and you will soon see yourself as a hidden treasure, as a pearl of great price or at the very least, a good fish.