**GOING DEEP INTO KINGDOM TRUTH**

**(Matthew 13:51-52)**

 I have never been there, but I would like to go someday. The place I have in mind is the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef is a chain of coral reefs in the Coral Sea, off the northeastern coast of Australia. It is the largest deposit of coral in the world. The chain starts just south of New Guinea and runs for about 1250 miles in a southerly direction anywhere for 10 to 150 miles off the coast the land down under. In some places you can stand on the coral a hundred miles from the coast, yet the ocean water only reaches up to your ankles.

 The late Calvin Miller wrote about going to the Great Barrier Reef with his wife and son. He reported that while their son donned scuba gear and went diving in the waters of Coral Sea, he and his wife went snorkeling, sun-burning their backs in the process.

 Miller wrote, “While my son plunged deeply beneath clear waters to bury himself in the wonder of the mysterious ocean depths, my wife and I, wearing masks, only floated on the surface facedown.”

 Let me ask you, if you had the ability to do either, would you rather scuba dive, or would you rather snorkel? Would you rather go deep, or would you rather just skim the surface?

 Miller observed, “In some ways it seems to me that much of Christianity is a conversation of snorkelers talking to each other of scuba experiences.”

 We need to understand that God is calling us into the depths of Himself. He wants us to plunge into a deeper experience with Him. God doesn’t want us to snorkel in the shallows; He wants us to plumb the depths of:

 His goodness,

 His grace,

 His mercy,

 His love,

 His holiness

 and His truth.

Don’t content yourself with the wading pool; launch out into the deep.

 We have been journeying through Matthew for some time now. We have been in Matthew 13 since the middle of June. In this one chapter, Jesus gives us one parable after another about His Kingdom. So far, we have examined 7 of them. In the two verses we will consider today, Jesus provides a concluding parable to His lesson that day.

 One commentator referred to this parable as the unwanted orphan of writers and preachers. People rarely write or preach about his parable. I have never heard sermon on this final parable Of Matthew 13.

 Our text is Matthew 13:51-52. At this point Jesus was speaking privately with His disciples. He asked them a pointed question. Basically, He was asking them: “Have you caught on to what I’ve been saying? Has the truth of My words penetrated your mind and lodged in your soul?”

 The disciples answered, “Yes,” but I have strong suspicion that they did not say yes with a loud voice and a confident heart. Since we weren’t there and all we have is the written record we don’t know with what kind of inflection they gave their answer. If you ask me a question and I say, “Yes!” you know there is no doubt in my mind; I am absolutely certain. If, however, I pause and say, “Well . . . yes,” you know that there is great doubt in my mind. The actual definition of both responses is the same, but there is a world of difference in what I really meant because of the way I answered.

 As a parent, I am sure there were times you looked your child in the eyes and asked, “Did you hear me? Do you know what I just said?” If he looked back at you with glazed over eyes and a blank stare and answered, “Uh-huh,” you know that he had no clue what you just said.

 The disciples just might have answered Jesus with a weak “uh-huh.” We know that the disciples had shown themselves to be rather slow on the uptake. They had consistently missed the point of what Jesus taught them. Even after Jesus was raised the disciples were still expecting Jesus to install a political Kingdom.

 Jesus might have been thinking, “Yeah, right,” but He doesn’t bother to inspect whether the disciples have really understood His teachings; He simply takes their answer at face value and proceeds to make the point He wants to make. He stressed to them the importance of receiving and imparting Kingdom truth.

 Throughout the gospel accounts we find Jesus doing all He can to teach Kingdom truths to His disciples. Kingdom truth was the bulk of His message and the focus of His ministry. If we fail to understand what the Kingdom is all about, we completely miss what Jesus taught and what He did.

 Jesus wants us to go deep into Kingdom truth. Paul wrote in Colossians 2:7, as rendered in the New Living Translation, “Let your roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught.”

 The secret for you to grow tall is for your roots to go deep. In the first parable of Matthew 13, Jesus tells a story of a farmer who went about sowing seed. Some seed fell on the ground, but it didn’t go in the ground. Other seed went in, but the roots didn’t go down; so, the growth didn’t last. Other seed went in and down, but not up. Other things choked out the plant. Finally, there was seed that went in, down, and up. The plant grew up and flourished because the seed was planted in good soil.

 If the soil of your heart is receptive, the truth of God’s word will go in and down, and good growth will result from your life. The secret of good growth is for your roots to sink deep.

 I want you to notice two ways that you and I can go deep with God.

**I. WE GO DEEP BY BECOMING A STUDENT OF KINGDOM TRUTH.**

 Listen to v. 52 in the NASB: “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of heaven . . .” Take note of two words: *scribe and disciple.* The Greek word for *scribe* is grammateus. We get the word *grammar* from that word. Grammar has to do with the study of how words are to be written and spoken. In Jesus’ day, a scribe was a person who was schooled in the use of Hebrew scripture. The scribes were viewed as the authoritative interpreters of God’s word.

 The gospel accounts reveal that Jesus did not hold the scribes in high regard because they had perverted their duty. Instead of teaching Scripture they were teaching their interpretations.

 Historically, however, the scribes had an important function. One of the first and greatest of the scribes was Ezra. When the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple after their captivity in Babylon, Ezra joined them, and he did so to teach the people the word of God.

 Likewise, we are to be schooled in the word of God. We need to know what it says and how to use it. We are to be trained in the secrets of the Kingdom. We need to understand life and how to live. Living life according to God’s standards, how to live the Kingdom life should be our business.

 How familiar are you with the Word of God? Truth be known, most of us have a very shallow understanding of Scripture. We’ve rarely gone below the surface. We know John 3:16, and we can manage to find a passage the preacher asks us to turn to if given enough time, but our knowledge of the various books of the Bible is very limited.

 We need to become scribes, and we need to become disciples. *Disciple* is the second word. The word *disciple* means *learner, follower,* or *adherent.*

 We read the words of Jesus in John 8:31-32, “If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

 A scribe teaches the truth because he has learned it. A disciple knows the truth and seeks to live it.

 We live in a world where some are searching *after* the truth, but we who are believers have found the search. We don’t search *after* it, but we are to search *into* it.

 I used to pastor a church in a university community. Many people in the church that I served placed premium on knowledge. We had several university professors in the church. Professors traffic in the instruction and dissemination of acquired knowledge. We had several university students. Students want to acquire enough knowledge to get the grades they need to get their degree to get a good job so they can support themselves and possibly a family.

 A university community sees knowledge as important, but you can find very few people in a university who see it as their job to traffic in truth. Many people even debate whether there is such a thing as truth. If they don’t deny its existence, they simply doubt whether it can be known with any degree of certainty.

 Some have bought into **moral relativism,** which asserts that there is no unchanging standard of right and wrong. Everyone is left to construct his/her own morality based on his/her own personal preferences.

 Others opt for **pragmatism** that says whatever works is best; thus, the question becomes not, “Is it true?” but “Does it work?” Many people are not concerned with whether Christianity is true. They just want to know “Does it work?” By that they mean, “Does it make me feel better? Does it solve my problems?”

 The prevailing philosophy today is **postmodernism,** which teaches that all viewpoints, all lifestyles, all beliefs, and all behaviors are equally valid. It is intolerant and absurd to argue that one position is true while the others are false.

 That is why one major city in America has renamed the Christmas holiday as “sparkle season,” and one school district has changed Easter eggs to “spring ovals.” We don’t want to offend anybody by claiming that the Christian faith is true.

 Despite the pervasive and destructive “isms” that abound in our culture, many people are asking serious questions about God. That is why it is so important that we, as believers, learn and live the truth.

 Some years ago, Hugh Hewitt wrote a book in which he claimed, “Evil and tragedy are everywhere around us, and it is getting harder not to notice.” If you read the newspaper and watch the news on TV, it is impossible to miss the presence of evil and tragedy.

 In our turbulent times, people are looking for a source of stability. They realize they aren’t in control, and they want to find something that gives them meaning to life. If you, however, are living your life with peace and purpose, people will begin to ask you questions. You will be prepared to answer those questions if you have given up snorkeling in favor of scuba diving. Let’s go deep.

 We go deep by becoming students of Kingdom truth.

**II. WE GO DEEP BY BECOMING A STEWARD OF KINGDOM TRUTH.**

 Look at the latter half of v. 52. It says that the scribe and disciple of the Kingdom “is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old” (NIV). I like the way Eugene Peterson paraphrased v. 52. He wrote, “Every student well-trained in God’s Kingdom is like the owner of a general store who can put his hands on anything you need, old or new, exactly when you need it.”

 Some weeks ago, I told you the story of a man named John Baker. Long before it became a restaurant, there was a building in Perkins, OK that was the home of Baker’s Dry Goods. John Baker, a life-long bachelor, ran the store. To the untrained eye there was neither rhyme nor reason as to how items were arranged in Baker’s Store, but just about anything you wanted could be found in Baker’s. The likelihood of you finding it was slim, but Mr. Baker knew where it was. It seemed that he used the stack method of arranging his goods, and if you asked, he usually knew in which stack to look.

 His store was a veritable repository of treasures—old and new. John Baker usually had what you needed, and he knew where to find it.

 Likewise, the truths of Scripture sufficiently meet the needs of people, and God calls upon us to be stewards of His truth. When we come across needy people, and all people are needy in one way or another, we are to match their need with God’s word showing them how the word of God addresses their particular need.

 Some people need a word of **comfort** because life is hard. Some need a word of **caution** because life is dangerous. Some need **correction** because it is easy to get off the right path. Still others need a word of **challenge** because there comes a time to get off the couch and start moving Whatever the need of the hour is, God’s word addresses it, but there must be a person acquainted with all the treasures of the house present to match the need of the person with the word of God.

 The word Jesus used for *owner of the house* was the Greek word oikodespota. That word is a combination of two words: oikos, which means *house,* and despotha, the word from which we get *despot.* It means *master* or *lord.* The lord of the house is the one who is in charge; such a one is the manager of the affairs of the house. It is essentially the same word as the one Paul used for women in 1 Timothy 5:14 when he says he wants younger widows to get married, have children, and manage their house. We are to house the word of God in our mind and heart, and we are to manage it well.

 A person who is schooled in the truths of the Kingdom has a treasury at his/her disposal. We are to take out these treasures, these truths often and show them to others.

 Jesus did not say that we are the curators of a museum. Artifacts in a museum are not to be touched or handled. They can only be looked at from behind glass.

 We, however, are to let others touch and handle and experience the treasures of God’s word. How do we do that? That question is answered in part as we understand what the treasures are. Some are said to be old and some new. That does not mean that some truth is old, and some truth is new.

 I agree with the fellow who said, “What is true is not new, and what is new is not true.” If someone comes along and claims to have a new revelation or a new interpretation of Scripture, you can be certain that person is off target.

 You may have heard about a man who went to see an old friend of his who was music teacher. When the music teacher answered the door, his old friend said, “Well good morning! What’s the good news for today?” The old music teacher didn’t say a word. He motioned the friend inside, and then he picked up a little rubber hammer and struck a tuning fork that was hanging there. As the note sounded throughout the room he said, “That is '**A**'. Now, that was '**A**' five thousand years ago and that will be '**A**' five thousand years in the future. The soprano across the hall sings off-key. The piano downstairs is out of tune. The baritone upstairs flats his high notes. But,” he said, striking the tuning fork again, “that is '**A**', and that, my friend, is the good news for today!”

 Friends, the good news for today is that God’s word was true when it was written thousands of years ago; it is true today, and it will be true for all eternity.

 What Jesus is saying is that the steward of God’s truth can take old truth and apply it the new circumstances of life in which people find themselves.

 Every person here and every person you know is experiencing something new. Some are living on their own for the first time. Their mom and dad are no longer watching over them. This is new. Some are newly married. Some are parents for the first time. Some are recent graduates and are working full-time for the first time. Some are grandparents for the first time. Some are recently retired. Some have entered a new phase of life. Some are facing a new diagnosis. Some are facing a new problem. What does God’s word have to say about your new situation?

 The steward of Kingdom truth takes the unchanging truth of God’s word and the varied experiences of life and brings the two together so that you can see how God’s word addresses where you are in life.

 By the way, the word that is translated as treasure is the Greek word thasaurou. That is where we get the word *thesaurus.* A thesaurus is a treasury of synonyms one can use to find just the right word to express what he/she wants to communicate.

 In a sense, the Bible is a thesaurus. It is a treasury of stories, and the one who is sufficiently familiar with Scripture can use it to find just the right story to communicate just the right truth to fit the present need.

 If you are a Christian, God has made you a steward of His word. The question is not, “Will I be a steward of the Word or not?” The question is, “What kind of steward am I being?” Have you wrapped up the truths of God’s word in a napkin and buried them, or are you using them as God gives you the opportunity to do so?

 Don’t keep the treasures of God’s word locked up in the storeroom. Bring them out often for the benefit of yourself and others.

 Since I began this message with a quote from Calvin Miller, I’ll end it with another one. Miller wrote:

 The ocean is too vast and scary for us, so we dump the Great Barrier Reef in favor of Gilligan’s Island. I think most Americans like *Gilligan’s Island* because it was a fixed sociology. The island was a proscribed world where Gilligan, the Skipper, Mary Ann, Ginger, the Professor, and, of course, a couple of rich plutocrats were making life work as best they could. None of them were going anywhere really. They were just living and talking about a bigger world. But their conversation never amounted to much and none of them sacrificed themselves in any major way to get off their island prison.

 Miller proceeded to compare the church to Gilligan’s Island. He maintained:

 The best way to live comfortably is to accept island living. Never even think about taking up your cross and risking yourself in some genuine spirituality. Keep your nose clean. Do your committee work, read your Sunday School [lesson]. Tithe . . . It is enough to study the deeper life—but remember, you could lose your place in the bridge square if you actually begin to live it.

 God is calling you out into the deep. Will you heed His call or are you going to stay in the wading pool?