

Sunday closest to July 27  
Proper 12  
Year A  
Genesis 29:15-28  
Psalm 105:1-11, 45b  
Romans 8:26-39  
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

*As I have gone alone in there  
And with my treasures bold,  
I can keep my secret where,  
And hint of riches new and old.*

Seeking adventure and Gold? Crack this poem and head out doors, the NPR article says. The mystery of eccentric millionaire Forrest Fenn's Treasure is enticing, exciting. Will you be the one the find it? Solve the riddle, written by Fenn himself, and you may be. I wonder whether we as modern Christians have lost the excitement about Jesus' parables? Is it because we've become so accustomed to hearing Jesus' words? Or do we feel some of the cultural references don't work for us? But think about it: Crack these parables and you'll find the most amazing treasure you've ever dreamed of. Jesus, like Forrest Fenn asks us, Have you understood all of this? Jesus invites us on this quest of discovery, upon a journey that's unlike anything else.

God invites us to discover the treasure of the kingdom. In these parables, Jesus shows us what happens when we do. He also shows us that there is value both on the path of discovery and value when we find it. Sadly, instead of finding fullness of life, the hunt for Fenn's treasure has turned tragic. Two people have now passed away as tens of thousands have followed the allure for riches but carry little or no mountaineering experience. The treasure itself is buried

somewhere in the Rockies between New Mexico and Canada. Fenn says, "I would advise them - the searchers - to stop taking risks. The treasure is not hidden in a dangerous place. I hid it when I was about 80 years old."

In a way, it feels like this is where Jesus parables and Fenn's riddle part ways. In the parable of both the treasure in the field and the pearl, we hear Jesus say the kingdom of heaven is worth risking everything for. There is so much great value in the kingdom, even more so than a treasure chest of gold and gems, that it welcomes the necessity of taking every opportunity to gain it, even if it means selling all that you have. In both cases, the merchant and the landowner, sold and risked all they had.

Currently, the kingdom of distractions and disruptions reigns over us all, distracting us from our priorities and what is really important. And I have to admit, I am exhausted by it. It reigns so high above us that we're constantly surrounded by a whirlwind of news and stories and events and fear mongering that it's sometimes hard to see through the tornado.

So instead, we could focus on a different kingdom- live into something different- Do you find yourself excited about what you could possibly gain? The gems that Jesus has for us is to live a fuller life. In this life, we understand and know God's love for us more and more. And by understanding that love, we understand ourselves better. And one of the many good things about the kingdom is we don't need to be more, or do more, or search more to do all that God invites us to do. What we have, even if it's a little speck, it's plenty. We are abundantly covered. Like the itty bitty mustard seed, that grows into a tree-reaching forth its branches. The branches become a lovely home for all the birds

that land there. Or, like the yeast in bread. The leaven expands, rises, and creates a positive, life-giving force. Small beginnings bring great results. This is the nature of the kingdom we can live in and bring to the world, instead of what surrounds us. This is in the inestimable value of the kingdom. We hold this knowledge of God and we shine a new light on it, and use that knowledge in a new way.

When we grow in God's love, people will find sanctuary and rest, with us. That is the purest of treasures- presence- being held in love and accepted for who we are and finding the gift to simply let go of what is burdening our hearts. The treasure is finding the life God intends for us to live. So, have you understood all of these things? How can we be confident to say, yes? God will grant us wisdom to understand. It's not supposed to be hard work, hidden so well that we can never access it or die trying. But it will take some initiative on our parts- to dig into the words and actions of Jesus, to try to understand better God's love for the world.

*So hear me all and listen good,  
Your effort will be worth the cold.  
If you are brave and in the wood  
I give you title to the gold.*

Will the effort be worth it to find Fenn's treasure chest? Who knows. In fact, who knows whether it's even out there or whether this is all just an elaborate hoax. But- the effort is worth it in the reign of God. Seek and you shall find treasures of great value, expansive, life giving treasures. What do you seek? Clarity in life? Continued love of self? Wisdom and discernment in making a decision? Healing

from loss or heartache? Reconciliation in relationships? I'm not saying that if I found the treasure chest of gold and gems while Hiking I wouldn't keep it. But, the spiritual gems that we seek, to give us balm for our souls- we can have those in the here and now. The answer to these and more, can be found in the parables of Jesus. Crack the parables and you'll know.

Burnett, John. "Seeking adventure and Gold?"

<http://www.npr.org/2016/03/13/469852983/seeking-adventure-and-gold-crack-this-poem-and-head-outdoors>