

The theme for this season when we think beyond Caversham and Dunedin is ‘Treasures Handed Down’ - it seems to come very much out of the bi-cultural journey our family of churches is on. From my perspective we’ve been a lot slower than other churches to embark on this journey. It feels like we’re running hard to catch up.

Living as we do in largely mono cultural city maybe we don’t have the same priority as in other places. You can see from this simple graph that we’re pretty mono-cultural here.

Ethnicity	Dunedin	Nationally
European	88	74
Maori	8	15
Asian	6	12
Pasifika	2.5	7

**I note in passing both add up to over 100% - you can’t even trust Wikipedia**

However we’re not so much thinking of New Zealand over these next mostly Asia where individuals and families representing us are working:

The three themes for this year are:

- The Gospel is Treasure
- People are Treasure
- Where is your Treasure?

And there’ll be a slight interruption to this programme on 25 June but more on that later.

On July 2 we’ll bring our offerings either by using this small nga kete to bring a gift to support the work of NZBMS/Tranzsend. Or of course you may use, as over two thirds of us do internet banking to do this. And remember that half of what you give to this appeal can be claimed as a donation rebate. For newcomers, I need to say that every year we join with the 220+ Baptist communities around New Zealand to support this appeal, although being Baptist many churches don’t join in – they say when you have two Baptists; you have at least 5 opinions.

Today then, the gospel is treasure

Jesus said in a list of small parables in Matthew 13:44-6

**‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.**

When I was a boy I found treasure in a field, although I was supposed to be picking mushrooms. I hid this treasure in my heart, not the ground for many years as I couldn’t buy the land (I was only 6); I only told one person about this treasure and then they died. After we’re done in here we’ll celebrate my hidden treasure’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The person I told before she died was Trudy’s mother, I was around 20 at the time – her mother Nina flattened me by saying, ‘at least we know what we’re getting.’

The kingdom of heaven is like.... treasure hidden in the field.

My questions of the text are:

What kind of treasure was it?

How big was it?

Had somebody hidden it there?

Was it gold?

Who did it belong to – the original owner or the finder... We were always taught finders, keepers weren't we?

Jesus seemed to be saying there is treasure; there are treasures so important that it's worth giving up everything else to retain it or them.

Note for instance the expression, 'in his joy.' He was really pleased to be able to purchase the field.

Let's pause and think about this – leaving aside relationships, health, income, or the things we consider essential for life, what do you treasure more than anything else?

After all, this guy sold everything to buy the field and get the treasure.

Is there anything you'd be prepared to sell everything else to have – in terms of things there isn't, is there?

Jesus underlines his point by making another statement

**45 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.**

A thing more valuable than anything else – treasure; a pearl of great value, oh dear Jesus sounds like a 21<sup>st</sup> century materialist?

What can the treasure be we ask?

These parables seem to come from a time early on when Jesus was gathering new followers. It was addressed to people who may have been mulling over whether to join him or not. They knew if they did, it would mean big changes. Jesus may be saying if you come with me, costly as it will be, you'll gain more than you lose.

Again, what can the treasure be? My only conclusion is that it's the life we have in Jesus!

The treasure hidden in the field, the pearly of great value is the good news about Jesus. Oh you say that's a bit of a let-down – I was hoping it was far more exciting than that.

Frederic Buechner, in one of his novels, describes it like this:

***'Well, it's like you're poking around a second hand shop, and inside an old trunk with the lid bent and broken you come across a pack of letters somebody's great granddad tied up with a string. They're from a friend back home by the name of Abraham Lincoln – they're worth at least five thousand dollars each if they're worth anything.***

***Now you tell me what a man would give to lay his hands on that trunk. Why he'd give his bottom dollar. He'd give his right arm for a treasure like that, Listen, he'd give ten years, twenty years, of his life. You know why? Because the Kingdom of Heaven, that's what it is. It's life. Not the kind of half-baked, moth-eaten life most of us live most of the time but the real honest-to-God thing - life with a capital L. It's the treasure a man spends all his born days looking for, no matter if he knows it or not.***

***The Kingdom of Heaven - it's the treasure that up till a man finds it, every other treasure that comes his way doesn't amount to squat.'***

John called this, 'life in all its fullness' or 'eternal life'; Jesus in Matthew calls it 'being blessed', Paul calls it 'salvation' or being 'in Christ.'

In this kind of life, we know we belong to God through Jesus; we know we're accepted by him despite who we are and how we behave; it's a life in which we share the happiness and sufferings of other people – pain and joy; it's a full life!

And it's for now!

And it might just be worth giving everything for!

### **TREASURE!**

Do we see our life in Jesus as treasure; as a pearl of great value?

Is it that important to us?

Or is Jesus just an additional extra?

Well let's read on a bit further in the New Testament

**But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.**

And later

**16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.**

The jars of clay – us

The treasure – Jesus in us

The power – God's

The battle – intense, troubling and costly

The hope – that Jesus may be revealed in us; that we may be renewed that that glory awaits us.

The gospel, the good news that Jesus died and lives, the news the God the Holy Spirit is active in us and through us – this is the treasure we have and we are to live out of it.

I love this picture of treasure in jars of clay – we crack, we're vulnerable, sometimes we're smashed – only that the treasure may be released around us.

The metaphor is treasure; Taonga

We have this treasure; this Taonga in us

It's Jesus – so Bruce you remind us what we're to do!

**11 Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

