

THE GOLD DIGGER... and the way he staked his claim
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(MATTHEW 13:44)

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field ; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." This text is based upon the fact that in ancient times banks were unknown in the Middle East. During Bible days men had to be their own bankers, and this led to the practice of burying treasure in the ground. No one thought of hiding valuables at home, for in the event of a Philistine raid whole villages could be destroyed by fire. Even to-day men can be seen digging around the remains of ancient buildings in the hope of finding wealth. Such men could be seen any day during the Lord's ministry ; and inspired by such a sight, Christ delivered one of His most picturesque sermons. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field."

The Man Seeking

Probably the finder had first heard about buried treasure when he was a little child. His mother told romantic stories which thrilled his heart, but these tales had been allowed to remain dormant in his mind. Now the boy had become a man, and with increasing interest had decided to test the validity of the account so often repeated. Armed with his spade he went forth to dig, and his first discovery revealed far more dirt than treasure. When he commenced his work, critics laughed him to scorn. The Lord Jesus declared that the kingdom of heaven was like that. God's treasures are not always found on the surface. It would appear that an evil hand has covered them. Enemies of the Christian faith glibly declare that seekers after eternal treasure will be more likely to find hypocrites. Their remarks accentuate the fact that to find spiritual wealth, man needs to look beyond dirt.

The Man Sacrificing

Ignoring the jibes of the onlookers, the digger proceeded with his task, and suddenly discovered the buried box. Careful investigation revealed that this was no hallucination. The story heard from childhood was true. Then a new problem appeared. He asked, "How can I make this mine?" Jesus continued, " . . . the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." We see the man selling his cottage, his clothing, his possessions - and if at the end of the sale he required extra money, he earned it with the labour of his hands. Carefully preserving the secret of his motives, the man appeared to be the greatest fool in the place. When he gave all his possessions in exchange for a field, his fellow citizens probably pronounced him insane. He merely smiled, for he realized that no sacrifice could be too great under these special circumstances. And the Lord said, " The kingdom of heaven is like that." Let a man discover reality in the Gospel, and the criticisms of a crowd will be meaningless.

The Man Succeeding

The business transaction was completed in the presence of the elders, and the news of the purchaser's lunacy became the talk of the place. Perhaps people followed him, and wondered what he intended to do with his property. Did the man borrow his neighbour's spade, or did he dig with his hands? The earth was thrown from the hiding place, and

THE GOLD DIGGER... and the way he staked his claim once again the treasure was uncovered. The astonished crowd gasped, for while they jested he had become rich. Within a little while his cottage was replaced by a mansion; his old garments were superseded by those of a prince. And Jesus said again, "The kingdom of heaven is like that." Let a man ignore the sneers of his fellow men; let a man look beyond what might appear to be hypocritical dirt; let a man seek wholeheartedly for God, and soon he will uncover eternal riches. The gold of grace, the pearls of promise, the rubies of redemption, and wealth from an everlasting realm will reward his efforts. The old cottage of mortality will be replaced by immortality; the corruptible will put on incorruption; and from poverty, the finder will be transported to realms of enchanting wonder. Yes, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Gold diggers and diamond hunters need excellent eye-sight. The entire purpose of their activities may be thwarted if they allow too much dirt to get into their eyes!

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